
Draft Report
37th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 6-7 July 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chair: Liao Xiaohan, China

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The agenda was adopted with the modification proposed by the US to discuss Agenda Item 4 “State of Play of GEOSS” before Item 2 “Report of the Programme Board”.

The Report of the 36th Executive Committee was approved.

All Action Items from previous meetings were closed.

The Secretariat Director provided an update on Secretariat activities, which included reporting on the convening of three GEO meetings; the Work Programme Symposium held in Geneva in May, the AfriGEOSS Symposium held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe in April and the AmeriGEOSS Steering Committee held in Bogota, Colombia in June. She gave an update on the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI), which has seen the number of enquiries rise from 400,000 in 2014 to 4.3 million in the first half of 2016. Japan’s chairmanship of G7, held in Tokyo in May, led to specific references to GEO in the Science and Technology Ministers’ Communiqué, The G20 Agricultural Ministers meeting in Xi’an referenced GEOGLAM in their communiqué. While John Matuszak reported on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Communiqué regarding the economic importance to undertake work on environmental information and data sharing, specifically citing GEO in this regard.

2 STATE OF PLAY OF GEOSS (AGENDA ITEM 4)

The Committee discussed the document proposed by the Secretariat which proposed a reassessment of progress towards the original vision of a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). The Committee requested that a subgroup, comprised of representatives from the Executive Committee, Programme Board and Secretariat, be formed to further frame issues and produce a two-page strategy for GEOSS comprising the broader aspects and implications for the GEOSS value chain: from federated observing systems to identification of gaps to use for policy and decision-making.

3 PRESENTATION OF SQUARE KILOMETER ARAY (SKA)

The Executive Committee noted with appreciation a presentation of Prof Philip Diamond, Director General, SKA. The SKA project is in its building phase for the next four years with a budget of Eur. 179 Million. The total life span, once operational is expected to be 50 years. The governing body is

pursuing International Organization Status (IGO) through the adoption by the Members States of a treaty.

4 REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME BOARD (AGENDA ITEM 2)

The Committee appreciated the work and report of the Programme Board. The recommendations made by the Programme Board were discussed with additional guidance provided in the areas of composition (to be based on results of the subgroup deliberations referenced above), tenure and voting procedures.

5 2016 WORK PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The Secretariat presented the current progress on the 2016 Work Programme. The formation of all Task Teams and identification of co-leads is almost complete and “Kick-off” teleconferences were run for all the Tasks. The Work Programme Symposium was a great opportunity for many of the teams to meet and advance progress on the activities. The Secretariat (through identified Experts) is supporting each of the Tasks, in accordance with the Work Programme provisions, pending resource constraints in some areas.

6 REPORT OF THE BUDGET WORKING GROUP

The Committee noted with appreciation the Budget Working Group’s (BWG) presentation of the Interim Financial Statement as of 31 May 2016. The Co-Chairs agreed to co-sign a letter to GEO Principals, as proposed by the BWG to elevate the importance of additional contributions to the Trust Fund, and Work Programme. The Executive Committee approved the 2015 Financial Statement and Audit Report.

7 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

7.1 Update on Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan

The Committee accepted Option 2 as presented in Document 10, calling for a small team to be formed to further develop the Implementation Plan, with guidance that the first two engagement objectives remain as framed, and that the third engagement objective be broadened. There was still a need to define main high level messages. Mr Jack Metthey of the European Commission will lead this team with additional nominations being sought from the Executive Committee and Secretariat.

7.2 Update from Commercial Sector Engagement Subgroup

The Committee noted with appreciation the work thus far of the Subgroup and their consultations to date with the Commercial Sector. The Subgroup was asked to continue their consultations, and to propose a Session be included in the upcoming GEO-XIII Plenary, including representatives from the commercial sector. Having considered the input from the commercial sector, the session will explore opportunities for collaboration and engagement based on specific themes, to be recommended by the subgroup, as well as to seek additional feedback from Plenary.

8 GEO WEEK AND GEO-XIII PLANNING

The Executive Committee recommended the need for a much more creative and radical restructuring of the agenda. They also recommended the use of interactive tools to insert more real-time feedback into the Plenary and potentially provide a different format for delivery of formal Statements. In this regard, written Statements from Member and Participating Organizations (POs) are to be submitted

well in advance of Plenary, and made available electronically to all participants.

9 GEO LEGAL STATUS UPDATE

The Committee approved the proposal from WMO to strengthen the current Standing of the GEO Secretariat under the WMO framework. This would be attained through a renewal the Standing Arrangement between GEO and WMO, with written acknowledgement of Switzerland of this strengthened arrangement.

10 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

10.1 Secretariat Operations Report

The Committee noted with appreciation the report of the Secretariat operations.

10.2 Review of Applications for Participating Organizations and Observers

Eight new Participating Organizations were approved. The Association of Geospatial Industries (AGI); the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education-English (ARCSSTEE); the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN); the Global Flood Partnership (GFP); the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT); the Integrated Carbon Observation System (ICOS); the World Ocean Council (WOC); and the World Health Organization (WHO). It was agreed that the Dartmouth Flood Observatory (DFO) be included in either the US contributions to GEO, and/or the Global Flood Partnership, as DFO is a contributing member of GFP.

10.3 Rules of Procedure

The Committee did not accept the proposal regarding membership accreditation, and agreed with the Secretariat's suggestion to reach out to Member Country Missions in Geneva when there is no regular response from Member Countries. The Executive Committee discussed the European Commission proposal for adding two additional Co-Chairs to the Executive Committee, and suggested that more time be devoted to discussing criteria if additional Co-Chairs are to be added. In the meantime, the current Co-Chair representation as 2+2 (2 from developed countries and 2 from developing countries) will be retained. Further consideration by the Executive Committee on other configurations should be discussed during 2017. The Executive Committee suggested the European Commission and Secretariat work together to present revised text acknowledging that the Ethics requirements pertain to GEO Members, Participating Organizations and the Secretariat. The revised text is to be presented at the next Executive Committee.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The 38th Session of the Executive Committee will be held on 8 November in St. Petersburg, Russia.

Draft Report
37th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 6-7 July 2016

FULL REPORT**Wednesday 6 July 2016***Meeting convened at 10:00*

Chair: Liao Xiaohan

1 GENERAL BUSINESS**1.1 Welcome Remarks and Introductions**

Liao Xiaohan, China Co-Chair, opened the meeting, stating that it will be important to resolve any outstanding issues with the GEO transitional Work Programme, the legal status, Implementation of the GEO Strategic Plan (2016), the Programme Board Report, and preparation for the GEO-XIII Plenary. He thanked the GEO Secretariat Director for organization of the 37th Executive Committee meeting.

Robert-Jan Smits, European Commission Co-Chair, expressed his pleasure to be attending, taking over from the previous European Commission (EC) representative, Rudolph Strohmeier. The Executive Committee agenda carried forward the message from Mexico City - that GEO should achieve maturity in the next decade. The Executive Committee agenda and discussions must concentrate on implementation of the Strategic Plan in this context, Mr Smits welcomed GEO Programme Board representation. It would be important to focus discussions against the content of the Strategic Plan and to avoid reinventing the wheel. Mr Smits said that he recognised that GEO has enormous potential but that this potential must be realised. GEO must succeed in getting the message across as the huge difference that GEOSS can make by engaging stakeholders and end-users is critical. The EC is particularly interested in future GEO activities to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and post-COP-21 United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) activities, as called for by the GEO Ministers. This was a critical point raised in the discussion on the GEO Engagement Strategy at the last meeting

The EC recognised that there is a need to progress as regards engagement with the private sector. He expressed his support for a more open approach and for all GEO Members to benefit from market development. It is important that GEOSS remains a public good and while commercial entities should not become GEO Members, they can be included in other ways. The EC welcomes the flexible, non-legally binding nature of GEO and believes it can evolve to ensure efficiency in the use of investments in Earth observations. Mr Smits particularly welcomed the presentation of the Square Kilometre Array, supported through the EU Research Infrastructure Programme which he said has had innovative arrangements with the commercial sector. He joined his fellow Co-chairs in wishing all parties a successful meeting.

Dr Kathryn Sullivan, United States Co-Chair, emphasized that the Executive Committee has a lot to do, echoed comments from the EC on sharpening the Executive Committee's focus and moving

ambitiously to consistently engage the private sector. We look forward to substantive discussions in connection with the Programme Board, GEO's legal status and the GEO Engagement Strategy.

Philemon Mjwara, South Africa Co-Chair, expressed a willingness to continue discussion on what is GEOSS and expressed gratefulness to the GEO Secretariat for taking note of this issue. He is impressed with the willingness of this organization to open itself up to self-evaluation and further inspection on the issues of how to bring in the private sector, and how to deal with GEO's legal status. He noted he was also pleased to help host AfriGEOSS Symposium in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

Liao Xiaohan, China Co-Chair noted active promotion of AOGEOSS and that a teleconference had been held with Japan, Australia and South Korea to support further development of GEO in the Asia Oceania (AO) region. In early June the Global Environmental Annual Report was released by China, based on ecological remote sensing. He noted that his Ministry is also working on engaging 19 Ministries in China to work together under the GEO framework.

Round-table introductions were made by all Executive Committee attendees and GEO Secretariat Director Barbara Ryan introduced two new members of the Secretariat Staff: Vanessa Aellen, Water Specialist on secondment from Switzerland and Maria Chalakatevaki of Greece, an intern who will be assisting the redesign of the GEO website.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda ([Document 1](#))

United States requested that Agenda Item 4 (State of Play of GEOSS) be moved forward to begin the day and set the frame for other discussions on Item 2 (Report of the Programme Board) and Item 5 (2016 Work Programme Implementation).

Outcome: The Agenda was adopted as modified.

1.3 Draft Report of the 36th Executive Committee Meeting ([Document 2](#))

The Secretariat Director indicated the report was distributed three weeks prior to the meeting, and with no objections the Report was accepted.

Outcome: The Report of the 36th Executive Committee Meeting, held in Geneva 8-9 March, 2016, was approved.

1.4 Review of Actions from Previous Meeting ([Document 3](#))

Outcome: The Actions from previous meeting were closed pending deliberations that occurred during the 37th Session of the Executive Committee.

1.5 Update on Secretariat Activities (*Presentation - for information*)

The Secretariat Director presented the update. She reported that Mongolia is the 103rd Member of GEO. The Secretariat has worked with Mongolia for three years, starting with the Asia Pacific GEOSS Symposium (AP GEOSS Symposium), largely financed by Japan. Mongolia is interested in collaborating with GEO on GEOGLAM and water issues. GEO Membership continues to have geographic gaps, in South America and the Caribbean, which AmeriGEOSS is expected to help with; in Africa which AfriGEOSS is assisting with further African participation; and through the emerging Asia-Oceania initiative, the Small Island Developing (SID) Nations, which are generally not yet GEO Members. It is hoped that these SIDs will be sensitized to the benefits of GEO Membership as they are some of the most susceptible geographic areas to the impacts of a changing climate, particularly sea-level rise. The GEO Work Programme Symposium was held in Geneva from 2-4 May, with 143 participants including some private sector entities. The new implementation mechanisms were presented. There was good involvement of the Programme Board in the Symposium, giving them an overview of Work Programme activities as a whole, with a reminder to ensure that climate, as a cross-cutting area, will still get visibility in the Work Programme. The 2030 Agenda was identified as a key reference for actions and activities. National, regional and international levels are starting to be woven

together. The role of a possible 2017 Work Programme Symposium was raised with an appeal for the community to consider the potential of co-locating it with the International Symposium on Remote Sensing in the Environment (ISRSE), recalling the excellent collaboration that was achieved several years ago when all the then-GEO Committees met at the ISRSE meeting in Stresa, Italy.

The Secretariat Director gave an update on the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) stating that GEO Secretariat Staff member Paola Da Salvo, working with Osamu Ochiai, are leading efforts to ensure registration of data in the GCI. The number of enquiries has risen from 400,000 in 2014; to 2.5 million in 2015; to 4.3 million in the first half of 2016 alone. The EC has committed resources to the European Space Agency (ESA) to upgrade the GEOSS Portal with ensuring strong linkages with the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR) architects of the GEOSS Discovery and Access Broker (DAB). The role of Community Portals was emphasized, so that users can start refining their queries, whether regional, e.g. designed for AfriGEOSS, AmeriGEOSS or Asia-Oceania; or thematic. All of this will make the GCI more meaningful.

The AfriGEOSS Symposium was held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe from 27 to 29 April with 110 participants from 23 countries and regional associations, demonstrating GEO's convening power. The AmeriGEOSS Steering Committee was held in Bogota, Colombia from 7 to 10 June. Appreciation was expressed to Colombia, Mexico and the United States -- the caucus members present at the Executive Committee meeting.

Japan's chairmanship of G7, held in Tokyo from 26 to 27 May, led an international dialogue on climate change and open science with specific references to Earth observations in the Science and Technology Ministers' Communiqué and to GEO in the Science and Technology Ministers Communiqué. The G20 Agricultural Ministers meeting in Xi'an, China on 3 June strengthened their commitment to GEOGLAM in their Communiqué. Germany will assume leadership of the Agricultural Marketing Information System (AMIS) as well as the G20, representing a key opportunity for engaging Germany in GEOGLAM.

Programme Board co-chair, John Matuszak reported on the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Communiqué regarding the economic importance to undertake work on environmental information and data sharing, supporting work with UNEP Live and GEO, with thanks to the Russian Federation for their support during the deliberations.

The Programme Board was briefed on the GEO Branding Guidelines developed by the Secretariat which describe use of the GEO logo and tagline for Flagships and Initiatives. National entities creating national mechanisms should also use the GEO logo, as should Community Activities. For GEOSS branding, a new schematic has been developed. The GEO website home page and major landing pages have been redesigned, Rik Baeyens of the Secretariat presented the new look and feel which is also mobile friendly and can, therefore, be viewed on multiple platforms.

United States requested that since GEO Initiatives cover several Societal Benefit Areas (SBAs), they should be accessible from the same web page.

2 STATE OF PLAY OF GEOSS (AGENDA ITEM 4) ([Document 5](#))

The Secretariat Director presented the document on the State of Play of GEOSS which laid the groundwork for reassessing progress towards the original vision of a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), and the associated open issues. The document was intended to stimulate a discussion within the Executive Committee, so that guidance to the Programme Board for development of the 2017-2019 Work Programme, and to the Secretariat (for the Foundational Tasks) can be clearly articulated, with assurances that we are collaboratively working on the most important issues, and have a common understanding for delivery of GEOSS.

The Director reminded the Executive Committee that GEOSS is not simply the GCI. Foundational Tasks on GEOSS development and GCI operations were referenced with priority given to defining user requirements; identifying the relevant global systems; supporting or reinforcing individual

mandates for sustained coordinated systems; federating systems; identifying gaps; and advocacy for filling the gaps. These tasks require clarity and alignment, true engagement, contribution and participation from the owners and/or operators of the global observing systems in both the GEO Work Programme, and on the Programme Board.

The South Africa Co-Chair, called for reflection on the fact that GEOSS was a proposal made in 2003, and wanted assurances that the mandate of GEO to create GEOSS is still relevant today. In this regard, GEO could engage people external to GEO such as UNFCCC in the process. Regional structures such as SADC can coordinate in-situ and satellite data, for GEOSS as well as for WMO and GFCS.

The United States Co-Chair restated the aims of GEOSS posited by the GEO Strategic Plan and noted the need to keep focus on all three comprising elements - a coordinated set of observations about the Earth (satellite, in-situ, and mixed); a coordinated, federated set of data systems (and standards and protocols to ensure interoperability), and the fostering of the use of Earth observations in improving societal decision making, the latter being the ultimate purpose behind the GEO vision. The U.S. Principal observed the current thinking about GEOSS, including in the Program Board's deliberations, to be narrowing too much to the data and the GCI, and not yet enough thought and attention being given to what and how GEO should play a role in helping to foster better coordination of sets of actual observations and fostering of the use of observations. She noted the multiple ways to approach this task - from thinking hypothetically about the universe of possible observations and identifying gaps, to working back from Societal Benefit Areas or other areas of decision making (e.g. SDGs) to identify the critical observations needed, what is not being shared, and determine how GEO must act to foster that sharing. It is important for Executive Committee, the Programme Board, and the Secretariat as thought partners to give greater attention to what is GEO's role in fostering and improving the universal observations, in fostering federated sets of data, architecture and protocols, and in catalysing the use of data and information for decision-making.

The GEO Principal from Australia stressed that the broad vision for GEOSS has not changed, but the world has, and the mechanism for achieving GEOSS also must change. In terms of brokering, GEO's capability has expanded, but we are still accessing structured data provided in a curated way by organizations, rather than consulting a full range of observations. If we do not recognize the world is changing, and that the source of information will not always be data from governments or POs, but also from the private sector, GEO will not achieve its vision for GEOSS in the future.

The GEO Principal from Germany remarked that the GEO vision is still unclear. GEO needs to work hard on the task to improve data availability for important initiatives such as mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and GEO will need to show how it is relevant at UNFCCC COP-22 at Marrakech in November 2016. GEO should sharpen its user profile to improve GEOSS' architecture and portal.

Japan called for GEO to leverage the shared data and deliver outstanding results as contributions to specific challenges. Also, suggested the initiatives and flagships to report concisely the particular facts of how those activities have contributed directly to the specific decision-making or the implementation of policies. CEOS echoed the comment of the US Co-Chair to focus on delivery of services and information for policy makers, rather than the tools for delivering them, as tools will inevitably become out of date. There is a need to understand how GEO determines whether it is successful and is making progress or not. Pointing out the trend to make the measurable important rather than the important measurable, CEOS emphasized the need to understand what's important for achieving GEO's objectives and establish criteria for measuring progress. Such an approach would be important for GEOSS as well, as trying to implement GEOSS that delivers everything to everyone everywhere all the time would be unachievable. It is important to be clear about what will constitute satisfactory progress in 1 year, in 3 years, 5 years and 10 years.

With respect to Secretariat's statement in the paper regarding a perceived lack of commitment and contributions to GEOSS from Members and POs, CEOS pointed out that space agencies invest billions on accessing data and making it available, being done in the full spirit of cooperation and accessible through GEOSS. GEO should make an offer, demonstrating the benefit of GEOSS, in order to attract

Member States. Adaptation is now the critical thing – what are the consequences of Members' agreements in Paris? Responding not with global data sets, but with local data on agricultural practices etc., is important because many of the decisions are made locally

WMO recalled the initial four points for GEOSS to address: global EO are not sufficient so there is a need for strategic coordination to minimize gaps; the need for joint efforts to fill these gaps; observations alone are not sufficient, so they should be framed by the SBAs; and support countries to provide data and services so that EO can be used more widely. WMO's initiative on climate services finds observations are far from sufficient, particularly in the polar regions and therefore, for WMO's Global Cryosphere Watch (GCW). In June, the WMO Executive Council paper on collaboration with GEO endorsed 11 areas of collaboration. WMO and GEO have complementary roles, and it was suggested that if the SBAs are too diverse, focus on more specific key areas.

Finland claimed the Vision and Mission of GEO are clear, the frustration is that things have happened outside of GEO itself, the internet took over things envisioned by the GCI. Having the correct perspective is important; GEOSS will never be fully realized, but can certainly serve as a reference model. This in itself is a success. There is a need for web statistics which would help all operators maximize their systems.

South Korea called for tangible deliverables. Seeking user perspectives to ensure that EO data can fill gaps to improve climate services based on both in-situ and satellite data – all of which can be complemented by forecasting.

GOOS recalled that the GEO value chain is important. GEOSS must demonstrate the use of SBAs and data for which GEO has advocated GOOS stated that in 10 years, ocean data will still be largely government driven, which is also probably true for space-based observations, so continuing to advocate for coordinating and sharing these data is essential.

The GEO Secretariat called for true engagement on the Foundational Tasks in terms of GEOSS development. There remains a need for the GEO community to identify gaps, and advocated that this be done within the structure of the Programme Board. Similarly, citing the GEO-XII document on the Value of Open Data, GEO has done a good job presenting a value proposition for sharing data. Governments, however, must fundamentally address this issue, and in many instances, change policies for more open data. The strength (and weakness) of GEO is that it is a movement with many institutions and individuals convening for different, and sometimes conflicting reasons.

The US remarked that the GEO vision brings the community together, but Members see things differently, and therefore often disagree on implementation. It is important to reach consensus on a given issue, see what it takes, and then get that one thing done, The Executive Committee should propose a lens, a topic, a focal point, otherwise time will be spent talking theory, and/or process.

South Africa stressed that when the global average rise in temperature is two degrees, in South Africa it is projected to be four degrees. Therefore, any notion that allows us to move forward should be considered. GEOSS should consider land use, ecosystems and biodiversity – the kind of observation systems we need, and the gaps, redefining the problems out there and what can the GEOSS framework do.

China recalled the reason they were convinced to join GEO was to create GEOSS as a transparent system, focused on bridging, linking, connecting and coupling things. GEO needs to develop confidence that we are on track to our destination. The vision for GEOSS, from the beginning and now, is still the same.

Outcome: The Committee agreed that the issue required further discussion, and that a subgroup should further frame the issue in order to guide and support the work of the Programme Board during the next three years.

- Action 37.1:** A GEOSS subgroup, for further framing of the issue, is to be established with nominees from the Executive Committee, the Programme Board and the Secretariat. The subgroup will develop a two-page strategy for GEOSS comprising the broader aspects and implications for the GEOSS value chain: from federated observing systems, to identification of gaps, to use for policy making.
- Action 37.2:** Executive Committee to provide nominations to the Secretariat by 1 August 2016. The Secretariat will contact the Programme Board co-chairs for their nominations.

3 PRESENTATION OF SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY (PRESENTATION BY PROFESSOR PHILIP DIAMOND, DIRECTOR GENERAL SKA)

The Square Kilometre Array (SKA) Organization was presented by Prof. Philip Diamond, Director General, as an example of an international government collaboration of 10 member countries with more to join. The structure is that of a small not-for-profit company, based in the UK. Members appoint two directors, there are around 60 staff coordinating 500– 600 scientists around the world. The total value of the four-year project is EUR 179 million. SKA expects to be operational for at least 50 years and needs to show it has sustained funding. The SKA Director is the only legal representative of the existing company structure and that will continue when SKA becomes an International Governmental Organization (IGO). IGO status was chosen, as it was inspired by organizations such as the European Centre for Medium Weather Forecasts (ECMWF), and that status can help minimize the tax burden on large procurement projects.

The Committee noted with interest that the SKA model of regional data centres with science-ready data and considered this to be a potential model for the EO/GEO community.

Outcome: The Committee noted with appreciation the presentation of SKA by Professor Diamond.

4 REPORT OF THE PROGRAMME BOARD ([Document 4](#))

Programme Board co-chair John Matuszak commented that from the Programme Board (PB) perspective, the 2017-2019 Work Programme and GEO Initiative proposals show GEO to be a robust institution. There are 25 initiatives, many proposed for 2016, addressing a wide array of policy questions facing governments. Discussions about integration of information and data on various environmental issues are being taken up through the initiatives and Flagships. The Programme Board met twice, participation has been mixed with not nearly as many governments as were appointed and not all POs have attended, although the engagement of POs has been more robust and active. The Programme Board is accomplishing much of its work through task teams that have been extremely helpful.

The Programme Board was tasked to organize the 2017 – 2019 Work Programme. Of the 25 initiative applications listed in Appendix B of Document 4, all but three have been reviewed. The deadline for initial review and response was Friday, 8 July and the Programme Board hopes to complete the process within that deadline. There is a template for a common review mechanism for every initiative although Flagships have an extra policy-mandate criteria. The review structure comprised one member to serve as lead reviewer with two additional reviewers and a Secretariat contact. The criteria for approval of a GEO Initiative were: is it strategic and does it contribute to the vision in the strategic plan, and will the project be sustainable if we give it a GEO brand?

The Programme Board placed a great deal of emphasis on User Engagement and suggestions for improvements to initiative proposals have been made with that in mind. Recommendations might be made for an initiative proposal to be reclassified, for example as a Community Activity, or in the case

of GI-18, as a Flagship. Authors are making revisions and Programme Board review and recommendations will be complete by mid-August for consideration at their meeting 7-8 September, 2016.

Work to establish the Foundational Task prioritization has focused on resources and responsibilities, based upon the Strategic Plan, focusing on the resources of the Secretariat (e.g. one of the Programme Board co-chairs is also on the Budget Working Group). It has become clear that the Secretariat has limited resources, and cannot achieve all deliverables under the current budgetary scenario. Strategic thinking is necessary – the category of Foundational Tasks for Secretariat Operations is essential, and encompass approximately 70 percent of Secretariat time. Some prioritization is recommended in terms of GEOSS Development and Community Development – for example EO, especially in-situ; data delivery systems. Initiatives and Flagships are the way in which GEO touches much of the world. Development of user needs for SBAs is also seen as key with a focus on specific areas to develop end-to-end projects.

In terms of Programme Board structure, there is a mandate to reduce the number of appointees to the Board from 42 to 32 – (that is about the number at which the Programme Board has been operating, see Appendix H for attendance which may also serve as a guide for re-nomination). It may be worth explicitly stating that a representative of a Member government or PO is appointed to the Programme Board, not in an individual capacity. The Programme Board recognizes the Executive Committee's responsibility to appoint the next Programme Board. Starting in 2017, the Board proposes that a lottery be established for duration of function with one third of Board members' terms expiring after one year, another third after two years and a third after three years, to allow for continuity of institutional memory and new thinking. That decision will be taken at the next Programme Board meeting. Terms of Reference have been drafted for the voting procedure for election of the co-chairs for the new Board. The current requirement for consensus in voting on issues before the Programme Board is not always efficient.

The Programme Board was briefed on Branding Guidelines, developed by the Secretariat (Appendix E) which were designed to produce alignment and therefore greater understanding of GEO through all of the activities undertaken in the GEO framework. The Programme Board reports there are on-going task forces, whereas others have been retired; work is currently carried out principally through ad hoc working groups, with no permanent bodies being created. The Programme Board has come a long way, perhaps descended into minutia at times, but has managed to move things forward, paving the way for the 2017 Work Programme.

China thanked the Programme Board members and co-chair and reminded the Board of the need to promote open data sharing at national levels; suggested most Board members and the three co-chairs be retained for the next Programme Board, with those members not selected given positions on working groups; suggested the Terms of Reference seem strict and the Programme Board must have enough time to work with GEO rather than spending time on further nominations.

The Committee thanked the Programme Board co-chair for the comprehensive report. The clear criteria for Special Initiatives and Flagships were welcomed.

For the most part the Committee supported the proposals made by the Programme Board. However, there were discussions, which centred on whether individuals are representing themselves or their organization and, in which case, the need for Programme Board nominees to provide CV's was questioned. There was a concern that the possibility of losing a seat on the Programme Board after only two absences appeared too limiting. There was some unease on the need to introduce voting procedures for topics other than the election of the co-chairs.

The Committee found the decision points relating to these areas needed to be further clarified and requested that a subgroup be formed to work on these open issues during this session. The subgroup was requested to develop the decision points that still required Executive Committee guidance and that these were to be presented the following day. The Chair further suggested that a PowerPoint

presentation would have assisted in clarifying decision points and recommended to use this method for all agenda items in the future.

Outcome: The Executive Committee decided on the following four elements:

1. Membership

- a) **Members/Participating Organization (PO) Principals nominate representatives to the Programme Board; therefore, nominations are made at discretion of the Member or PO;**
- b) **Nominations may include a single principal, or a principal and up to two alternates. Nominees are request to prove a short biography with their nomination;**
- c) **The Secretariat will propose a slate of candidates to the Executive Committee Co-Chairs recommending a maximum of 32 members.**

2. Tenure

- a) **Lottery procedure for staggered Programme Board term length retained as described in suggested modifications. Re-nomination of Board members is permitted;**
- b) **Non-participation in three consecutive Programme Board meetings may result in recommendation by Board co-chairs to the Executive Committee for removal.**

3. Operations

- a) **Voting procedures for co-chair selection retained as described in suggested modification to the Rules of Procedures of the Programme Board;**
- b) **The Programme Board works by consensus. Issues resulting in non-consensus may be brought forward to the Executive Committee for resolution.**

4. Foundational Tasks

- a) **The Secretariat to continue implementing (for 2016) the GEO Foundational Tasks, and propose for 2017-2019 a suite of Foundational Tasks for Programme Board review of scope and substance as foreseen in the Strategic Plan.**

5 2016 WORK PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION ([Document 6](#))

The Secretariat presented the progress on the 2016 Work Programme. An informative document was prepared to give an overview on implementation and progress in each area with a specific focus on the progress on Foundational tasks. The formation of all Task Teams and identification of co-leads is almost complete and “Kick-off” teleconferences were run for all the Tasks. The Work Programme Symposium was a great opportunity for many of the teams to meet and advance progress on the activities. The Secretariat (through identified Experts) is supporting each of the Tasks, in accordance with the Work Programme provisions and compatible with the resource constraints.

Outcome: The Executive Committee noted the progress reported on the 2016 Work Programme.

6 REPORT OF THE BUDGET WORKING GROUP ([Document 7](#))

6.1 and 6.2: Resourcing and Interim Report on Income and Expenditure as of 31 May 2016

Stuart Minchin of the Budget Working Group (BWG) presented document 7, Report of the Budget Working Group and document 8, Interim Report on Income and Expenditure as of 31 May 2016. He noted that contributions received to date were significantly below what was pledged, and that the sooner funds come in, the sooner the Secretariat can operate with certainty. It was noted that Plenary agreed in November to a budget of CHF 4.6 million cash contributions, but that has not yet materialized. The Secretariat has been operating effectively within its means, but is doing less with those resources than planned. The BWG proposes that the Executive Committee Co-Chairs co-sign a letter to GEO Principals in order to stress the importance of appropriate funding levels. The BWG prepared a draft letter in Document 7. The view of the BWG is to have pledges made at Plenary as a best practice. An indicative level of contributions was developed by the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG), with guidance as to what level of voluntary contributions would be relevant based on GDP. The BWG proposed that countries unsure of the level of voluntary contribution to consider, may contact the Secretariat for individual guidance.

The Committee discussed that the need for resources, both cash and in-kind secondments, to be identified so that GEO delivers on expectations; this implies an ethical commitment from every GEO Member. The 10-year plan adopted at the GEO Ministerial Summit in 2015 set bold targets that will require an adequately resourced Secretariat. Contributions should be assessed according to what GEO should achieve, for example, secondees should be adequately qualified and experienced for the post in order to be counted as an in-kind contribution. It is important that pledges at Plenary should also provide an indication of when the contribution would be made, in addition to the amount.

Secretariat Director Ryan noted that the lowest contribution using the draft indicative scale is CHF 1,000, and that the algorithm took into consideration the European Commission contribution as a composite of European Countries. She also noted that the 80/20 or 90/10 circumstances exist in GEO – 88% of the resources are provided by 12% of the Members.

Outcome: The Executive Committee agreed that a specific agenda item be added at Plenary for the identification of pledges and that a letter is sent to GEO Principals fostering contributions to the Trust Fund and Secretariat.

Action 37.3: Executive Committee Co-Chairs to review the Letter proposed by the Budget Working Group (BWG), and provide any revisions (in track-changes) to the Secretariat by 15 July 2016.

Action 37.4: Executive Committee Co-Chairs to review and sign the revised letter by 31 July 2016.

6.3 2015 Financial Statements and Report of the External Auditor ([Document 9](#))

Mr Luckson Ngwira, WMO Finance Director, presented the 2015 Financial Statements and Audit Report. The net assets of the Trust Fund decreased from 2014 by 0.2% due to an Actuarial adjustment which has been charged to reserves for long-term employee benefits. The Statement of the financial performance showed that the Trust Fund essentially broke even in income and expenditure. As in previous years, it is difficult for the Secretariat to align expenditure with actual income because of unpredictable timing and amounts of contributions to the Trust Fund. There was an under spending on expected budget and the implementation of the budget is constrained by the income received. The Audit Report was, as in previous years, unqualified or in other words, a clean audit. The Auditors had no specific comment for GEO, but made a few recommendations for improvements to WMO, which have been accepted by the Secretary General. He expressed his appreciation to the internal and external auditors.

The Secretariat Director expressed her appreciation to the WMO Finance Team for the excellent working relations.

Outcome: The Executive Committee approved the 2015 Financial Statements and Audit Report.

7 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

7.1 Update on Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan ([Document 10](#))

The Secretariat Director presented the Update on the Engagement Strategy. The document presented three options for action by the Executive Committee. 1. Accept the high level objectives of the strategy and extend the comment period; 2. Accept the high-level objectives and form a small team to further work on the Strategy; or 3. Agree to revisit the plan in one year's time when the Senior External Relations Manager position is on board.

The Committee discussed the need for the Strategy to support several of the international agendas (Sendai, SDGs, UNFCCC, etc.) and establish firm partnerships emphasizing that Earth observation data plays a key role in addressing challenges for humankind. It was suggested that the Co-Chairs' play an active role in opening doors to further these relationships. The document listed many events but fell short of naming the specific high-level messages to be presented in each of international agenda settings.

The Secretariat Director mentioned that the Engagement Strategy had been presented as an annex to the Strategic Plan, and that this document is the more detailed implementation plan for the subject strategy.

CEOS remarked that engagement is via the Work Programme not on top of it, and that GEO should make sure activities will secure meaningful engagement. For example, by providing specific examples of where geospatial data will make a difference if they engage with GEO regarding the UNFCCC Paris Agreement. Then take that message to Parties interested in climate rather than telling them about the GCI.

The US thanked the Secretariat for the continued effort noting that the Executive Committee is made up of different voices, groups, nations and potential partners at different stages. The US agreed with CEOS on the need to harvest particular methods, such as, what is the objective to be shown to UNFCCC? The US would be pleased to join further efforts.

The Secretariat Director said the intention of the Strategy was to transcend and cut across key Multilateral Environmental Agreements. If the Executive Committee, however, called for prioritization and references to specificity that is, indeed, possible. The Programme Board co-chair proposed one way the world knows GEO is through its Initiatives. These Initiatives address a wide range of issues. South Africa proposed restructuring the strategy to identify those who see the benefit of GEO's work.

Outcome: The Executive Committee accepted the 2nd Option proposed in the document which is to form a subgroup to advance the implementation Plan. The EC Co-Chair proposed the appointment of Jack Metthey (EC) to chair the subgroup. The Secretariat Director requested clarification that the high-level objectives were sound. There was broad agreement that the aims and implementation contained in the first two engagement objectives was sound, and that the third engagement objective would be replaced. The three engagement objectives for which the Executive Committee approved are shown below:

- 1. To ensure that Earth observations underpin global (environmental) decision-making;**
- 2. To advocate for broad, open data policies and practices;**
- 3. To enable and maintain rich understanding of how data needs and**

infrastructures are evolving, enabling feedback at every level, from various actors.

Action 37.5: An Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan subgroup, chaired by Jack Metthey (EC) to prepare the next version of the Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan, based on the three objectives articulated above.

Action 37.6: Nominations from the Executive Committee and Secretariat for the subgroup to be communicated to the Secretariat by 1 August 2016.

7.2 Update from Commercial Sector Engagement Subgroup ([Document 11](#))

Yana Gevorgyan, United States, presented the report of the Commercial Sector Engagement Subgroup and outlined actions taken to reflect upon a set of questions used to seek feedback from commercial companies and harmonize thinking among Executive Committee members. These questions would be used by GEO Principals as they consult with private sector entities within their own countries. The Subgroup developed a list of questions comprising experience with GEO, considerations for future collaboration, modes of informal interaction or a more defined relationship between GEO and commercial companies: ‘corporate associate’ to help advance collaboration, what characteristics would be appealing, realizing all companies are not the same, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) views, and how they engage with GEO. The Survey received 30 responses, many through the EC from European Companies. The Subgroup also held a Breakfast meeting with 20 companies in Rotterdam, The Netherlands in the margins of the European Geospatial Business Summit to collect additional data and feedback from the private sector. Although the sample size is relatively small, entities expressed positive views on engaging with GEO.

The Survey found that in large part companies want to identify a scope of issues and try to form strategies and partnerships in that context for a particular purpose. There is interest in engaging with GEO, provided it includes GEO Members and Participating Organizations. The number of resources available influences the appetite for engagement. Participants tend to focus on regional opportunities. The Survey delivered a mixed response on working arrangements with GEO – some participants skipped the question, The Survey delivered a mixed response on working arrangements with GEO – some participants skipped the question, several stated that there was value in having a defined relationship with GEO, and one association responded that their members did not have an appetite for direct engagement. It was pointed out that some of the members of that association in their individual responses favoured having a defined relationship with GEO. Concerning the type of commitment, the majority of the responses indicated no particular preference for the terms of engagement. .

Responses varied to the Survey question on intermediary or direct engagement. In summary the forum concept is generally universally supported, assuming it is done with GEO Members and POs, and a Session to be held during the GEO Plenary Week, open to all companies and associations would also be of interest. The commercial sector does not see value in a stand-alone trade show or Side Event. The consultations with the commercial companies have created a momentum and should, therefore, be leveraged. The Subgroup recommended piloting a dialogue with the commercial sector as an integral part of the GEO-XIII Plenary in St. Petersburg. Two industrial sectors participated, and indicated that information from GEO could be useful, one was the wine industry, and the other was precision agriculture. Regarding the mode of engagement, the Subgroup felt the Executive Committee should make a recommendation to Plenary to consider creating a category for the commercial sector in addition to Members and Participating Organizations. A category could be created with no financial contribution expected.

Executive Committee discussion focused on the fact that the feedback was from European companies, apart from one, and there is a need to get broader feedback. Most members in the Executive Committee viewed corporate associations and their engagement with GEO as a means to avoid the perception that one must pay to talk with GEO, as this may distort the market and favour large companies.

There was discussion on how GEO needs to engage with the commercial sector at the Plenary level, whether it be in the Plenary itself, (which led to a side discussion on the agenda of the Plenary, including a proposal to limit the time allotted to Member Statements); GEO-XIII could feature a private sector Side Event, otherwise private sector engagement may be better addressed through the Work Programme Symposium or a Geospatial News and Media Symposium, both are examples of fora where Principles can reach out to people in their own governments. The Chair emphasized that GEO's main body is Member States and enterprise partners should not be treated as part of the GEO framework per se. A private enterprise forum could be set up to encourage the private sector to participate in the development of GEOSS, and as proposed by one Member, but not for global or regional activities. The term 'associate' could be appropriate, the term 'strategic partners' allows for interpretations, and although the dialogue at St. Petersburg is appreciated, whatever results, the selection process for subscribers should be transparent.

It was postulated that it is easier for GEO to engage with the private sector than for an UN agency like WMO, which is now addressing the fact that there are companies who are no longer content to sell observational hardware, but rather observations themselves. Another UN organization, UNEP, was referenced as an example of UN/commercial sector collaboration, with the UN Environment Assembly mandate (through the UNEP finance initiative) to influence environmental decision-making through ministerial dialogue with representatives of 200 companies including banks, investment and insurance companies. A series of initiatives were given as examples of UN engagement with the private sector such as UNEP's programmes for clean concrete production in Japan, and sustainable mining; private sector interest in The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) study; the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) Green Climate Fund with contributions from the private sector; and the fact that the UN Secretary General's Global Compact in New York has 800 companies involved. The point was made that GEO is not taking a bold position regarding private sector engagement, rather GEO is lagging behind. It was then suggested that the UN has made steps engaging with the private sector in foras and *ad hoc* instances, but not yet at the deliberative level.

One suggestion was to drop further engagement with the commercial sector if they will not contribute financially, and it was then counter-argued that the relationship should not be seen as only a means to mobilize resources, but rather as a means for GEO to accomplish its mission through others, and to demonstrate broader relevance, in which case resources may follow. It is necessary to address how to approach commercial remote sensing companies. The danger of dealing with established industries is that they do not necessarily represent the new players in the market, and may not even be in business in 10 years. It was proposed that data provision is not the only way GEO could work with the private sector, but also through the service industry which governments, who have invested in EO, want to engage in order to add value to their initial investments in observation systems. Users of geospatial data such as insurance companies are fascinated by data from disaster risk reduction for obvious reasons. Another category of commercial interest in EO is through resource management and food.

The Secretariat Director spoke of current GEO engagement with the private sector at the Geospatial World Summit (Rotterdam), with the private sector from Europe, India and the US, and reminded the Committee that the Brazil Plenary (2012), in the Mexico City Plenary (2015) and the Mexico City Ministerial Declaration all said that GEO should engage more broadly with stakeholders, including the private sector. The Executive Committee proposed to keep the Survey open, and to demonstrate a concrete example of EO commercial sector collaboration such as precision agriculture. The Chair asked the Subgroup to continue to work on this issue.

Outcome: The Executive Committee welcomed the work of the Commercial Sector Engagement Subgroup and requested the group to continue their consultations with the commercial sector. The proposal of a dedicated Session at the end of the first day of GEO-XIII was agreed. This Session would follow the Sessions on the Work Programme 2017-2019 to which the commercial sector representatives, as guests of the Secretariat, will be invited.

- Action 37.7:** The Secretariat to post the Survey online and GEO Principals are encouraged to advertise this online Survey by 1 August 2016.
- Action 37.8:** The Commercial Sector Engagement Subgroup to seek representation from Africa, Asia and CIS; Nominations to be communicated to the Secretariat by 1 August 2016.
- Action 37.9:** The Subgroup to prepare a Commercial Sector Session for GEO-XIII Plenary by 31 August 2016.

Adjourned at 18:00

Thursday 7 July 2016

Meeting convened at 09:00

8 GEO WEEK AND GEO-XIII PLANNING**8.1 Logistics (Presentation by Representative from Russia)**

Zoya Andreeva, Russian Federation, announced that on behalf of ROSHYDROMET and ROSCOSMOS, she was pleased to invite the GEO community to the GEO Week from 7–10 November, 2016. An overview of the venue was provided. The event will be held at the Park Inn by Radisson, Pribaltiyskaya, St. Petersburg.

The Committee expressed its appreciation to Russia for its kind invitation.

8.2 GEO Week and GEO-XIII Agenda Options ([Document 12](#))

The 38th Session of the GEO Executive Committee will be held on 8 November, with Side Events to be held on 7–8 November only. A Call-for-Interest in Side Events laid the groundwork for seeking expressions of interest, with a recommendation to consolidate Side Events (a request following GEO-XII in Mexico City which featured so many Side-Events that often resulted in low attendance and/or competing Event).

The Secretariat Director presented the GEO Week and GEO-XIII Agenda Planning. Feedback received from the GEO Community suggests that the Plenaries are overly focussed on process, and do not provide sufficient emphasis on the GEO Initiatives and Flagships, or programmatic directions of GEO. Such information could be used by the GEO community for communication within their own governments to promote the merits of GEO. The Secretariat, in their call for expressions-of-interest, has signalled a process where similar or like-proposals will be merged.

The Committee discussed creative ways to make the Plenary agenda more interesting. A working group consisting of the Secretariat and Co-Chair Representatives will make suggestions and arrangements, although for the commercial sector round table, the previously mentioned subgroup will cover that agenda item. There was a request for interactive queries through mobile phones to ensure broader participation, expertise and an open dialogue.

The Secretariat Director referenced Item 2.2.1, national reports, asking if there are strong feelings for Statements by Members and POs. The discussion focused on how these national interventions are broadly unpopular and lengthy, but Plenary is the only time some Members have the opportunity to let the GEO community know what they are doing. The Chair raised the point that a speaking engagement may justify attendance of an international conference for travel planning purposes and delegates may need to speak not simply attend. A reporting of regional caucus deliberations of 5-7 minutes was suggested and to limit national interventions to 1–2 minutes. Another suggestion centred on using electronic means to disseminate this information.

Outcome: The Executive Committee called for a creative and radical restructuring of the agenda. They also recommended interactive tools be used to provide a different format for delivery of formal Statements. Written Statements from Members and POs are to be submitted well in advance of Plenary, and shared electronically for all to see.

Action 37.10: The Executive Committee, Co-Chairs and the Secretariat to think more creatively and strategically about the Plenary agenda; Secretariat to seek additional feedback from the Executive Committee by 1 August 2016.

9 GEO LEGAL STATUS UPDATE ([Document 13](#))

The Secretariat Director presented the update explaining that the action item on GEO Legal Status, from the 36th Executive Committee, has been overtaken by events, including positive overtures from the new Secretary General of WMO, and an enhanced and strengthened standing within WMO.

The WMO Legal Office, Swiss Legal Office and GEO met to discuss GEO's Legal Status. The accepted view is that GEO does have a legal mandate through the host agreement between Switzerland and WMO. The discussion focused on the fact that the solution proposed by legal colleagues to provide GEO with legal personality is both simple to implement and fit-for-purpose. The arrangement is to be undertaken in two-steps – the first, with a new version of the agreement between WMO and GEO, and the second between WMO and Switzerland. It was observed that this is an elegant and relatively risk-free solution; and should greatly facilitate GEO's membership on the Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) of the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS). This arrangement should also strengthen GEO's request for Observer Status in UNFCCC, though additional support from Member States is requested.

Outcome: The Executive Committee approved the proposal put forward by WMO, Switzerland and the Secretariat regarding the Legal Status of GEO to obtain an increased Legal Standing of the Secretariat through revision of the hosting arrangements.

10 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

10.1 Secretariat Operations Report ([Document 14](#))

The Secretariat Director presented the document informing the Executive Committee that the Secretariat would like this document to be responsive to their needs, comprised of accomplishments and achievements of the Secretariat. The travel tables are supplemented by an explanation of how a particular mission links to the Work Programme.

10.2 Review of Applications for Participating Organizations and Observers ([Document 15](#))

The Secretariat Director presented to the Executive Committee the applications received from organizations requesting PO status. Nine organizations requested PO status and the Secretariat recommended accepting eight organizations that fully met the criteria. One organization (the Dartmouth Flood Observatory) was not approved, as this organization is affiliated with an organization that was approved (the Global Flood Partnership (GFP)).

Outcome: The following Participating Organizations were approved:

- AGI, Association of Geospatial Industries;
- ARCSSTEE, African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education-English;
- ASREN, Arab States Research and Education Network;
- GFP; Global Flood Partnership;
- HOT, Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team;
- ICOS, Integrated Carbon Observation System;
- WOC, World Ocean Council; and
- WHO, World Health Organization.

10.3 Rules of Procedure ([Document 16](#))

The Secretariat Director presented the Rules of Procedure and remarked that of the 103 Members accredited to GEO, the Secretariat has lost contact with around one third. The Executive Committee endorsed the Secretariat request to further engage the individual Missions here in Geneva when contact with a given Member is lost.

Outcome:

- **The Executive Committee did not approve an annual membership accreditation clause in the Rules of Procedure. The Secretariat to continue to work with countries and permanent missions to the United Nations on reactivating and reaffirming membership;**
- **The Executive Committee decided to not act upon a proposal to increase the number of Co-Chairs, largely based on the lack of agreed-upon criteria for evaluation. The current representation of 2+2 (2 from developed countries + 2 from developing countries) will be retained until further consideration can be given (in 2017) to other models and/or criteria for selection;**
- **The Executive Committee requested the Secretariat and EC to work together to frame an Ethics paragraph that pertains to the entire GEO community – Members, POs and the Secretariat.**

Action 37.11: Secretariat to work with the European Commission to craft language for the Ethics paragraph that is applicable to GEO as a whole. Revised text to be circulated to the Executive Committee for review by 1 August 2016.

11 SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

Action 37.1: A GEOSS subgroup, for further framing of the issue, is to be established with nominees from the Executive Committee, the Programme Board and the Secretariat. The subgroup will develop a two-page strategy for GEOSS comprising the broader aspects and implications for the GEOSS value chain: from federated observing systems, to identification of gaps, to use for policy making.

Action 37.2: Executive Committee to provide nominations to the Secretariat by 1 August 2016. The Secretariat will contact the Programme Board co-chairs for their nominations.

Action: 37.3: Executive Committee Co-Chairs to review the Letter proposed by the Budget Working Group (BWG), and provide any revisions (in track-changes) to the Secretariat by 15 July 2016.

Action 37.4: Executive Committee Co-Chairs to review and sign the revised letter by 31 July 2016.

Action 37.5: An Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan Subgroup, chaired by Jack Metthey (EC) to prepare the next version of the Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan, based on the three objectives articulated above.

Action 37.6: Nominations from the Executive Committee and Secretariat for the subgroup to be communicated to the Secretariat by 1 August 2016.

- Action 37.7:** the Secretariat to post the Survey online and GEO Principals are encouraged to advertise this online Survey by 1 August 2016.
- Action 37.8:** The Commercial Sector Engagement Subgroup to seek representation from Africa, Asia and CIS; Nominations to be communicated to the Secretariat by 1 August 2016.
- Action 37.9:** The Subgroup to prepare a Commercial Sector Session for GEO-XIII Plenary by 31 August 2016.
- Action 37.10:** The Executive Committee, Co-Chairs and the Secretariat to think more creatively and strategically about the Plenary agenda; Secretariat to seek additional feedback from the Executive Committee by 1 August 2016.
- Action 37.11:** Secretariat to work with the European Commission to craft language for the Ethics paragraph that is applicable to GEO as a whole. Revised text to be circulated to the Executive Committee for review by 1 August 2016.

The meeting ended with considerable discussion and concern regarding the process by which two agenda items were summarized – State of Play of GEOSS and Report of the Programme Board. [The Secretariat has since written to the Co-Chairs proposing a series of pre-meeting, during-meeting and post-meeting actions in order to avoid similar circumstances in the future].

16:30 Adjourned.

37th GEO Executive Committee

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