

Revised Criteria for Observers, Participating Organizations, and Moratorium

This Document is submitted to the Executive Committee for decision in advance of the GEO-XII Plenary, where it is presented as Document 14.

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to present revised criteria, consistent with previous guidance, for Observers and Participating Organizations (PO) to join the Group on Earth Observations (GEO). If Plenary agrees to the revised criteria for POs, action on the current moratorium can be taken.

2 BACKGROUND

As GEO enters its second decade, considerable preparatory work, discussion and deliberations regarding broader Stakeholder Engagement in GEO have occurred, including but not limited to, the Post-2015 Working Group (2012-2013), GEO-XI (2013), the Geneva Ministerial Summit and Declaration (2014), and the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) (2014-2015), culminating with the new GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS. Each of these efforts has acknowledged the contributions that GEO has made to the global environmental community, in large part because the entire Earth observation spectrum (collection to users) exists within GEO. This fact, as well as the desire to ensure that all Members and POs are actively engaged in and contributing to GEO, and the implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), led to a re-evaluation of the criteria currently in use.

3 REVISED CRITERIA

In developing the revised criteria, the GEO Executive Committee also spent time exploring and articulating the underlying principles of being a PO or an Observer with the difference largely being based on the level of involvement in, and commitment to GEO. Pending Plenary and Ministerial endorsement, recommendations made in the GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2015: Implementing GEOSS, POs would be eligible to serve on the Programme Board, and with demonstrated commitment and action, would also be eligible to be nominated as an Observer to the Executive Committee (three seats reserved for POs).

3.1 Participating Organizations

GEO welcomes, as Participating Organizations, intergovernmental, international, and regional organizations, development banks, foundations and non-governmental organizations with a mandate and/or interest in, or be a user of Earth observations, information or services – that is, the full spectrum and/or value chain from data collection to use.

Independent recognition of sub-programmes or subgroups of currently recognized Participating Organizations are generally discouraged from seeking independent recognition. Generally, the parent organization is considered sufficient. In selected instances, and if a compelling argument is presented as to why separate participation is being sought, applications from sub-programmes or subgroups will be considered.

The Participating Organization applicant must identify their proposed contribution to GEO, including, but not limited to, involvement in the GEO Work Programme, and/or the function performed by the organization that would benefit the broader GEO community. Examples of the latter include capacity building, data sharing, programme development, training and education, and communication and outreach.

Applicants requesting PO status in GEO will send an application to the GEO Secretariat endorsing the GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS.

3.2 Observers

GEO welcomes, as Observers, intergovernmental, international and regional organizations, development banks, foundations, and non-governmental organizations with a mandate or interest in, or be a user of Earth observations, information, and/or services – that is, the entire spectrum or value-chain from data collection to use. Member States recognized by the United Nations are also eligible to become Observers.

To be recognized as an Observer of GEO, entities will send a letter to the GEO Secretariat, requesting formal recognition as an Observer, acknowledging familiarity with the GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS.

4 REVIEW OF NEW APPLICATIONS

Upon receipt of applications (from Participating Organizations) and Letters of Interest (from Observers), the GEO Secretariat will perform an initial review against the above criteria, and make recommendations to the GEO Executive Committee for its consideration. The Executive Committee will, prior to each Plenary, make recommendations for recognition and final action by Plenary.

The Plenary will, taking into account the recommendations of the Executive Committee, make the final decision on the requests for recognition of Participating Organizations and Observers according to the above criteria. The Plenary will make decisions on the requests for recognition by consensus of GEO Members present.

5 ROLLING REVIEW OF EXISTING PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Aligned with the intent of ensuring that POs are actively engaged in GEO and in implementing GEOSS, the Secretariat will undertake, on a rolling basis, the task of analysing contributions made by POs in GEO. A timeframe of 3 years will be used to assess such contributions. Results of the analysis will be reported to the Executive Committee for its review and recommendations for future action. Again, the intent of such an analysis is to encourage active participation and engagement in the work of GEO.

6 RECOMMENDATION ON MORATORIUM

Given that the proposed revised criteria address earlier guidance regarding eligibility of POs, and if accepted by Plenary, the Executive Committee recommends that the moratorium, put in place at GEO-XI, be lifted. If done so, applications received following GEO-XII would be assessed using the new criteria.