

Summary Report
26th Executive Committee Meeting
Iguaçu Falls, Brazil, 21 November 2013
(As accepted at the 27th Executive Committee meeting)

Meeting commenced at 09:00

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair representing South Africa, Philemon Mjwara. He observed that this meeting came at an important moment as many new elements are being put into place: the Secretariat has a new Director, and GEO is welcoming new Members and putting new structures into place (e.g. Implementation Boards). There is a need to step back from the details to take a view of the bigger picture, to be reminded what GEO was created for, what GEOSS will bring, and to move the Plenary discussion along. For the current meeting, the immediate task was to go through all documents for the GEO-IX Plenary to make sure the Executive Committee is fulfilling its mandate.

Gilberto Camara of Brazil then greeted the Committee and stated it was a great honor for Brazil to host the GEO-IX Plenary. He expressed his hope that the venue reflected the spirit of the country, allowing everyone to feel welcome and work effectively.

Each of the Committee Co-Chairs thanked the delegation from Brazil for hosting the GEO-IX Plenary. The United States Co-Chair, Kathryn Sullivan, observed that the US viewed this particular moment as important in the build-up to 2013 Ministerial. The Co-Chair from the People's Republic of China, Prof. Liao Xiaohan, echoed the US remarks, and looked forward to working together with everyone towards a successful meeting. The Co-Chair from the European Commission (EC), Manuela Soares, hoped to be able to review all documents to adequately prepare for Plenary and make it a success. She noted there was much to decide at Plenary and a need to demonstrate progress made thus far, as preparations for the 2013 Ministerial get underway.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1)

The Committee then reviewed the agenda and supporting documents in preparation for the GEO-IX Plenary. The US requested a 30-minute executive session be added to the end of the agenda as a matter of good business practice, not a predicator of any concern. Brazil asked to discuss the post 2015 vision for GEO in detail. The Chair clarified that all GEO IX documents, including the Post-2015 WG Interim Report, would be properly discussed under agenda item 3. The agenda was then adopted without further changes.

1.2 Approval of Summary Report of the 25th Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2)

The EC remarked that the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Implementation Boards (IBs) indicate that the IBs should provide intermediate reports to the Executive Committee. At the 25th Executive Committee meeting, the EC had suggested that IBs nominate Co-Chairs to be present at each Executive Committee to present the IB reports, but this recommendation had not been noted in that report. The EC therefore asked that this be recorded in the Summary Report and that in future, such an invitation would be extended to each of the three Implementation Boards.

Canada commented that interventions from Member delegations should not be referred to with gender pronouns in Executive Committee reports, and suggested that the last report be modified accordingly.

New Zealand suggested that in section 7.2 (Review of Actions from Previous Meetings) of Document 2, reference to the United States Geological Survey (USGS) be deleted, leaving only the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

The Co-Chair from South Africa concluded by declaring the Committee can accept Document 2 as a true reflection of the 25th Committee meeting once the comments made have been incorporated into Document 2.

1.3 Review of Actions from previous meetings (Documents 3)

The Secretariat Director presented the document and reviewed items that either had been closed since the 25th Committee meeting, or were still open.

New Zealand suggested that, although activities had been happening both at regional and Secretariat level, Action 24.7 should be left open.

With respect to Action 24.10, the Director noted this issue will be formally presented at the 27th Executive Committee. However, given the urgency of this issue, the EC will be calling on the GEO-IX Plenary to establish a Ministerial Working Group (MWG) immediately.

The Director noted Action 25.1 had been closed, referring to Annex 3 of GEO-IX Plenary Document 7.

Regarding Action 25.2, although the Director noted it had been closed, the US observed that certain issues kept coming up in successive reports and the Committee thus needs to identify a way to fully address them. For example, the involvement of end-users needs to be addressed in a more systematic way, yet this did not get captured in the response to this action. The Director responded that, although there is always room for refinement, GEO-IX Documents 5 and 6 represent a first attempt at producing a common report between and among the Secretariat and the IBs. The UK requested that this Action be considered as still open, given there is more work to be done before it is fully achieved. The EC and Germany concurred, noting the request from the 25th Committee meeting for the production of a single document. The Chair concluded by noting Plenary Documents 5 and 6 could be discussed in greater detail during the course of the discussions under agenda item 3.

The Director noted that Action 25.4 was considered closed since it had been captured in GEO-IX Plenary Document 15.

Regarding Action 25.6, the Director explained that a preliminary draft had been distributed at the 25th Executive Committee meeting. However, it was felt that the map did not adequately portray the relations of the Executive Committee and the Secretariat, so a new document had been prepared and would be distributed presently. The US requested the action be left open until the item was fully satisfied.

The Director noted that, although the mechanics of Action 25.7 were considered closed, some members continued to feel strongly about elaborating ways to strengthen the relationship between GEO and the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS).

2 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS REPORT (DOCUMENT 4)

The document was reviewed by the Director who noted the use of modified headers as the Secretariat worked towards a more synthetic approach to the report.

New Zealand commented that ongoing support to the Data Sharing WG had not been noted under section 4.

The US remarked that Annex D needed to be developed further to include additional criteria for the Secretariat functions, in order to define measurable indicators of progress. Also, in relation to Annex B, the US was concerned about having a clear understanding of Secretariat positions that are set to terminate in 2013. The EC thanked the Secretariat staff for all its efforts, and supported the comments of the US, adding that more details concerning job descriptions and a time frame for filling positions was needed. Regarding Annex D, the view of the EC was that the Director should review the current process, (which is based upon the description of the duties of the GEO Secretariat in the Rules of Procedure) and refine it, but not go into a complicated exercise. Brazil likewise supported the US remark that Annex D was too generic. In Brazil's view, as GEO considers its next phase, it was perhaps time to admit that the secondment process is not perfect. Brazil also noted that the Director has little control over seconded experts, an issue which can go unnoticed without adequate indicators. Staffing problems will be solved only if the experts are appropriate for the positions, and there ought to be some suite of indicators to measure this.

Canada observed that, although the report was a reflection of the activities of the Secretariat, the issue of the promotion of GEO needed to be highlighted. This had been an important part of Secretariat activities in the early phase of GEO, and the Secretariat should prepare a comprehensive communications and outreach strategy based on a clear vision of GEO that targets key stakeholders and provides guidelines as to where GEO is headed.

Germany asked for summary results of the meetings that are mentioned in the report. The UK thanked the Director for the informative report and asked the Director to summarise the outcomes of her meetings with the various Participating Organisations she'd been engaging with. The Director responded that there had been a fair amount of "bridge building" with POs in the past several months. The strategy had been to welcome them into the GEO tent, along with Member governments, and ask what GEO can do to help them advance their objectives. However, development of a communications strategy was indeed important, thus the call for a secondment had been issued. The Director added she saw value in structured mechanisms (e.g. MOUs, etc.), but also noted that GEO is not a UN organization and as such should have a light touch. She felt the emphasis should be on building relationships and determining how GEO can become an observer or even partner in a given organization. Canada responded with a concern that this approach could lead to "mission drift". GEO has a set of objectives, and as it looks to the future, GEO needs to understand the activities POs are involved with, that can align with GEO's mandate. The Director responded that she was aware of the potential for "mission creep", and of the danger of trying to be all things to all people. Thus, the strategy has been to map GEO's Strategic Targets to those of the organization-to-be-visited in order to show where work being done in GEO may contribute to their goals and objectives. Seeking ways of advancing open data sharing and leveraging the Communities of Practice (CoPs), in particular with entities such as GFCS, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and Future Earth of the International Council for Science (ICSU) has also been undertaken. Japan supported the remarks of Canada, adding it is important to note the synergies between GEO's activities and those of the POs in a context consistent with GEO's mission. New Zealand agreed with UK that more details are needed on bilateral discussions with POs and finding ways to leverage those relationships to spread GEO throughout their networks. The final outcome should be that they see the value in promoting GEO.

With respect to performance indicators, the Director agreed that more definition was needed and suggested drawing on Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) expertise to obtain input for writing meaningful indicators. She added that, in her view, the former set of indicators was too detailed, and centered on outputs, rather than outcomes. She believed that broader categories would be more informative and meaningful. The US responded by stating it was looking for indicators that help everyone determine how well the Secretariat is performing in carrying out its responsibilities in support of GEO. Canada commented that it was important to understand how progress is measured before indicators can be developed. Moreover the performance of the Secretariat must be considered in the wider context of whether GEO itself is performing, which includes everyone.

On the issue of staffing, Brazil expressed concern that, with so many Secretariat positions terminating in 2013, it will be difficult to have a Secretariat that can support adequate preparation of the 2013 Ministerial. The Director noted that secondments differ from fixed-term staff in that the latter can be renewed, but are dependant on contributions from GEO Members to the Trust Fund. More broadly, the GEO Work Plan is a manifestation of what everyone is contributing to GEO. Initiatives such as GEOGLAM require support both in terms of policy and resources to be successful. AfriGEOSS and Brazil-GEO are examples of regional/national approaches to GEO that require political support at several levels of government. Japan remarked that, although the report was general, the Director's explanations helped clarify some of the staffing issues. In the future it would be helpful to have more in-depth explanations as had been done verbally, and Japan stands ready to discuss any needs for additional experts.

In conclusion, the Chair summarized by noting that:

- 1) More work was required on the Secretariat performance indicators. The Secretariat is therefore requested to present a reworked set of indicators to the 27th Executive Committee at the March 2013 meeting;
- 2) Adequate Secretariat staffing is a concern, especially for preparation of the 2013 Ministerial Summit. Clarification will be sought during the executive session with respect to renewal of fixed-term staff, as well as the level of expertise needed and expected from secondments. Also, job descriptions need to be produced to better assess the level of expertise required;
- 3) There is a need for a coherent, comprehensive outreach/engagement strategy, and the need to respond to recurrent themes appearing in GEOSS Evaluation reports (proper understanding of end-users, for example).

Action 26.1: Secretariat to revise Secretariat performance indicators for presentation to the 27th Executive Committee meeting in March 2013.

Action 26.2: Secretariat to develop a comprehensive communication strategy and produce an updated communication plan.

3 REVIEW OF GEO-IX PLENARY AGENDA AND DOCUMENTS

GEO-IX Document 1 (Rev 1) - Draft Agenda *(for acceptance)*

The EC, as chair of the GEO-IX Plenary, stated that the Post-2015 WG Interim Report and discussion would commence by 15:30 at the latest on Thursday, 22 November, regardless of where Plenary was in the agenda. Otherwise, the Committee approved the GEO-IX agenda with no modifications.

GEO-IX Document 2 - List of New Members *(for information)*

The Committee noted that Ivory Coast had become the 88th Member of GEO, but unfortunately was unable to attend the Plenary.

GEO-IX Document 3 (Rev 1) - Recognition of Participating Organizations (POs) *(for acceptance)*

The UK queried whether the World Data System (WDS) was a subsidiary of ICSU and thus truly qualified as a PO in its own right. Canada also observed that it was not typical for GEO to recognize a secretariat as a PO and requested clarification in connection with the application from the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The Director responded that, although it was true that WDS is subsidiary of ICSU, the added value of the of WDS contribution appeared to justify an independent application for recognition. Likewise, with respect to the UNCCD, the intent was to include the entire institution, not just the Secretariat. Canada requested clarification

that the UNCCD Secretariat was indeed the proper mechanism, acting on behalf of the entire organization.

The UK remarked that it may be helpful to clarify the definition of Participating Organisation in the Rules of Procedure as, for example, the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS) and Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) are independent organisations. The US noted that item 3 of ANNEX C (Guide for Recognition of New GEO Participating Organizations and Observers) of the current RoP states: “A sub-programme or subgroup of a currently recognized Participating Organization *need not* be considered for independent recognition.” In the view of the US, this could be amended to say: “... *should not* be considered...” if that is the overall intent. The UK supported the suggestion of the US, saying the current language is ambiguous. South Africa recalled that decisions from past Plenaries indicated that applications from subsidiaries would no longer be considered. The US concurred, noting that the full Plenary had adopted the RoP and several PO applications had been turned down since 2008. Canada cautioned that consistency was needed, and GEO must be clear about the position being adopted in the context of a motion to change the RoP.

The EC observed that the bigger issue was an explosion of POs, many of which are not making any contribution to GEOSS. In this case, the EC noted the WDS stood ready to make a major contribution to the GCI and GEOSS Data-CORE in particular. Moreover, subsidiaries have been admitted in the past and GEO must be careful not to turn down a major contributor. Japan concurred, noting the structure of ICSU is complicated and the WDS will make a substantial contribution in its own right. South Africa then recommended, in view of the value of its contribution, acceptance of the WDS application. The Chair added, however, that there needs to be an explanation of the ambiguous formulation in the RoP with an acknowledgement that applicants have been turned down in the past. In the meantime, the language of the RoP will need to be modified. China supported this proposal, noting it was in favor of an inclusive approach to PO applications with not so narrow an interpretation of the RoP. The US also supported the proposal, adding that the issue of the role and engagement of POs needs to be reconsidered more broadly in the context of GEO post-2015.

The Chair concluded by noting the Committee’s recommendation to Plenary was recognition of all 3 PO applicants (WDS, UNCCD, and International Cartographic Association), modification of the RoP notwithstanding.

Action 26.3: Secretariat to propose modification to Rules of Procedure to eliminate ambiguous language with respect to the application for Participating Organization status of subsidiary groups.

GEO-IX Document 4 - Draft Report of GEO-VIII (for acceptance)

South Africa noted specific recommendations had been made by each of the former GEO Committees for incorporation in the Implementation Boards, and there was a need to indicate whether this has happened.

Action 26.4: Implementation Boards to confirm that GEO Committee recommendations from GEO-VIII Plenary have been taken into account in their work. Secretariat to follow-up on this action.

GEO-IX Document 5 Assessment of Progress against the GEOSS 2015 Strategic Targets (for acceptance)

GEO-IX Document 6 GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan Implementation Report, Task Assessment (for acceptance)

The Director introduced the documents, noting that these should be considered as a first attempt to respond to guidance from the July Executive Committee meeting, which had called for incorporation of traffic-light coding and addressing bullet outcome statements of the GEOSS Strategic Targets in order to provide a high-level indication of progress. The Director added that the Implementation

Boards (IBs) and the Secretariat have both worked very hard and very collaboratively to design, develop and complete the reports on time.

The EC asked who was set to present the documents at Plenary. The Director responded that Prof. Stuart Marsh would present Document 5 and the first half of Document 6. The remainder of Document 6, Work Plan Implementation Highlights, would be presented by Work Plan Coordinator Dr Alexia Massacand. The UK requested clarity on what was expected of Plenary with respect to these documents. Key actions and recommendations appeared to vary tremendously – some dealt with requests for resources - and it was important to find a way to acknowledge that some issues may be carried forward in different ways. The EC noted that Plenary was not committed to accepting the recommendations, but simply to recognize and acknowledge them. EC reiterated its view that both documents effectively represent a single report and, as such, should be presented as a single document. The EC recommended that both documents be accepted, but asked the Secretariat to work with the IBs towards producing a single assessment document for GEO-X Plenary, and modify ExCom-26 Document 5 to reflect this. The EC also requested that for each meeting of the Executive Committee, the Secretariat submit a Task Assessment report (the tables in first part of Document 6), and the IBs produce an Annual Assessment report for Plenary (Document 5 plus the tables in first part of Document 6) while the Secretariat prepares the second part of Document 6.

EC Proposal

Looking at the structure of GEO-IX Documents 5 & 6, and given that the IB Assessment of Progress against the GEOSS 2015 Strategic Targets needs to take account of the Work Plan implementation progress at the Task level, the following scheme could be proposed to harmonise the annual reporting cycle with regard to the Assessment of progress for both the GEO Secretariat and IBs.

For each meeting of the Executive Committee:

- the GEO Secretariat should submit a 2012-2015 Work Plan Task Assessment Report, i.e., the tables shown in the first part of GEO-IX Document 6;
- the IBs should submit a report identifying issues requiring guidance from the Executive Committee on GEOSS implementation issues.

For Plenary:

- the GEO Secretariat should submit a Report identifying the highlights and GEO added-value of the 2012-2015 Work Plan Tasks, i.e., the second part of what is reported in GEO-IX Document 6;
- the IBs should submit a consolidated report on the Assessment of Progress against the GEOSS 2015 Strategic Targets, i.e., the current GEO-IX Document 5, together with the tables on Task assessment from GEO-IX Document 6 in Annex.

Germany agreed that the reports represent an improvement, but found that the added-value of GEO was a component missing in the report. The US remarked that IN-05 was red, and this can impact implementation of GEOSS. Canada observed that some issues are beyond the control of GEO, such as the need for investments in infrastructure, which may never be resolved and therefore a yellow light is not necessarily a caution. GEO needs to acknowledge that there are instances where progress is being made in some activities in the context of resources available for the Task, but also recognize that GEO may not be able to achieve the full Target unless governments take action. The Director reiterated that these reports were a work in progress, and that not one Task reported it had sufficient resources. She also noted with respect to IN-05 that no international entity exists that can move *in-situ* measurement issues forward, as compared to the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) for space-based Earth observation coordination.

The Chair concluded by endorsing the proposal of the EC for a single assessment report for GEO-X Plenary, to be presented at the next pre-Plenary Executive Committee.

Action 26.5 Secretariat to work with IBs to produce assessment reports, as outlined by the EC.

GEO-IX Document 7 Third Evaluation of GEOSS Implementation *(for acceptance)*

GEO-IX Document 8 Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group Proposal *(for acceptance)*

The Committee noted that South Africa, supported by the UK and CAN, took the lead in drafting responses to the evaluation findings and recommendations. South Africa reported on common findings from each of the previous M&E WG evaluations:

- 1) **The issue of clarity of the GEO mandate.** On the one hand, previous evaluations have reported a lack of clarity with respect to GEO's mandate. This lack of clarity was also mentioned by people involved in specific GEO Tasks. Others noted that the GEO mandate is clear and that all Members and Participating Organizations become associated with GEO after accepting and identifying themselves with the spirit and the letter of GEO principles. What this ambiguity points to is the needs to intensify awareness raising programmes and perhaps to highlight that which makes GEO unique or its value add;
- 2) **Lack of user engagement.** This could be a perceived problem, but still needs attention. GEO's ultimate impact is to be felt or measured at users' level. It is therefore logical to expect that our activities will be informed by users needs and for this reason user engagement will be critical. Findings one and two also point to possible gaps in communication;
- 3) **Providing evidence of GEO value-add:** A question of GEO's value-add has come up time and again. This also happens to be the question that needs answering even as we look into the future of GEO beyond 2015. The question keeps coming up perhaps because it has not been sufficiently clarified or communicated to all stakeholders;
- 4) **Gap analyses:** All previous evaluations alluded to the need for gap analyses. Current and previous responses to this issue suggest it is being partly addressed by the evaluators, partly by Implementation Boards, and partly by the Work Plan team. In other words no single entity is solely responsible for gap analysis. The context of this finding is central to the very existence of GEO. It questions whether we shall be able to meet our goal or not, and if not, what needs to be done to rectify the situation.;
- 5) **Coordination and alignment of Tasks and Strategic Targets:** The question has been raised on how each Task aligns with the Strategic Targets of GEO. It would seem because of the voluntary nature of GEO some tasks are just accepted because Members and Participating Organizations are willing to contribute. Some Tasks are registered and never followed up.

As an additional result of this preliminary assessment, South Africa also recommends that the M&E Working Group will put in place a mechanism to revisit previous findings and establish the extent to which they are being addressed (refer to the proposal contained in Doc. 8). South Africa briefly discussed the enclosed table, which contains an example (related to some recommendations from the Second Evaluation) on how to summarize the results of the assessment.

The Chair noted that Mr Craig Larlee was to present both 7 and 8 at Plenary.

GEO-IX Document 9 GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan Annual Update *(for acceptance)*

The Director presented the document, noting that any changes from the previous Work Plan had been highlighted in grey. Brazil stated that the general understanding is that the resources for implementation, identified for the various Tasks, are made available in accordance with the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles. The Director will present the update to Plenary.

GEO-IX Document 10 AfriGEOSS – An Initiative to Build GEOSS in Africa *(for information)*

The document was to be presented to Plenary by Mr Agbaje Ganiyu, the Nigerian GEO Principal.

GEO-IX Document 11 Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI) Task Force Progress Report *(for consultation)*

The Director reported that Mr Simon Eggleston had accepted the GFOI position at the Secretariat. She also noted the message she delivered at the recent CEOS meeting was that CEOS will continue to be increasingly solicited from international initiatives such as GFOI, GEOGLAM, GBOI, etc. Brazil noted the issuing of the yearly report on product development and the good progress in updating requirements. It also asked for a realistic assessment on the magnitude of resources needed to implement GFOI.

GEO-IX Document 12 GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring (GEOGLAM) *(for consultation)*

The UK commented that when a document is being presented for consultation, it is important to be clear concerning what, if anything, Plenary should do about it. Also, a concern to the UK was the lack of response to issues raised in the past, most notably a funding strategy with scalable funding options. There is a need for clarification on how the proposal and the partnership should develop, which needs to be reflected in presentations. Germany noted it was unsure about what is being developed in GEOGLAM initiative, and the mechanics, governance, and funding strategy were still unclear. Brazil offered that a series of meetings to fine-tune these issues, including finding adequate resources, may be necessary, since many of the GEOGLAM participants have not been involved in prior international initiatives.

GEO-IX Document 13 Report of Data Sharing Working Group *(for information)*

Brazil commented that mention of data should be excluded in cases where it is uncertain whether that data will be made available at no cost. The EC responded that the intent of GEO is to provide access to any source of data, even those that come with restrictions, with the overall objective of moving towards full and open data sharing. GEO should not, therefore, take an exclusive approach to the kinds of data it provides access to. Brazil confirmed they intend to support the Working Group.

GEO-IX Document 14 Engaging the Private Sector in the Implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) *(for consultation)*

The Director presented the document, observing that GEO already has private sector engagement (e.g. Open Geospatial Consortium, a PO). The question was whether Plenary wished to take a more systematic approach regarding engaging the private sector. Moreover, the value proposition for the private sector perhaps needs better articulation. The US commented that it is not realistic to imagine that a “one-size-fits-all” value proposition can be derived, thus there is the need to consider engagement with the private sector on a case-by-case basis. Brazil sought to clarify that the definition of the private sector includes both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and non-profit foundations (i.e. non-commercial), as well as commercial entities. Canada noted that it is important to acknowledge the private sector role in providing added value services, as well as the opportunity and need to thoroughly and openly discuss the context, implications, contributions, and expectations.

GEO-IX Document 15 (Rev1) GEO Post-2015 Working Group Interim Report *(for consultation)*

The Chair noted key points regarding the report: 1) the document was being presented for guidance, not acceptance; 2) it should trigger the processes for Ministerial preparations and establishment of the Ministerial Working Group (MWG); and 3) the role of GEO in the long-term may be linked to Rio+20. The consensus recommendation was that GEO should continue post 2015, noting lessons learned, in the context of increasingly acute global challenges. The EC emphasized that the Post-2015 WG interim report was being presented for consultation only and the response from Plenary should

focus on providing guidance as to which options to develop further. Although this interim document was not for negotiation, Plenary comments could be incorporated into the final report to be delivered by the WG.

Canada suggested that a document for Ministerial presentation should contain two parts: directions/outcomes, and the associated governance to go with it. Brazil wanted either substitution or clarification on the term ‘incubation’ as non-native English speakers may not fully comprehend this term. Also, Brazil commented that the current governance model has imperfections, particularly with regard to the lack of provision for rotation/election of Executive Committee Co-Chair seats in the RoP, an issue which should be rectified prior to 2015, as well as composition and permanent membership of the Committee. More generally, in Brazil’s view, having a Co-Chair seat on the Executive Committee in general should clearly imply a responsibility to contribute strongly to the resources required to run the Secretariat (Trust Fund and secondments).

The Committee was divided on whether to schedule a Ministerial Summit in 2013. Some members felt that, since this had been committed to by the previous Ministerial Summit (Beijing Declaration, 2010), it was imperative to adhere to this schedule. Others argued that was insufficient time to adequately prepare such an important Ministerial with respect to the future of GEO. Most shared the view that two Ministerial decision points were necessary by 2015, one to provide direction and commitment on the future of GEO, and the other for development of an implementation plan which Ministers will commit to. There was consensus that Plenary should be requested to establish a Ministerial Working Group in order to fast-track preparations. The Chair proposed that the issue of timing of the Ministerial be raised with Plenary on Day 1 with the hope of achieving consensus by the end of Day 2.

Action 26.6: To address Brazil’s request, the Secretariat to prepare a statement on what are the current RoP provisions for Co-Chairs and membership of the Executive Committee, to be discussed at the 27th Executive Committee meeting.

GEO-IX Document 16 2011 Financial Statements and Report of the External Auditor (*for acceptance*)

The US offered to present this document to Plenary.

GEO-IX Document 17 (Rev1) Interim Report on Income and Expenditure 2012 (January to September) (*for information*)

GEO-IX Document 18 (Rev1) Secretariat Operations Budget for 2013 (*for acceptance*)

The Secretariat Director will present these documents to Plenary.

4 REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO GEO-IX (GEO-IX DOCUMENT 19)

The preliminary report had been prepared, summarizing the 24th and 25th Executive Committee meetings. There was no comment on this initial draft. The report was to be finalized subsequent to the 26th Executive Committee and circulated to Plenary the morning of Friday, 23 November 2012. The UK offered to present the report to Plenary.

5 SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PLENARY SESSIONS FOR 2013

China repeated previous requests that Executive Committee meetings be kept to maximum two per year. The US suggested separating the question of how often the Committee needed to confer versus the means to do so (in person, electronically, etc).

The Chair suggested this issue be tabled at the 27th Executive Committee meeting in March 2013.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Director presented Document 6 (Developing a Global Biodiversity Initiative), noting that the Secretariat had been approached by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in this regard.

The Committee was informed that Switzerland was likely to make an intervention during the GEO-IX Plenary to offer to host the GEO-X Plenary and Ministerial Summit.

Meeting adjourned at 18:15

APPENDIX

EXAMPLE (RELATED TO SOME RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SECOND EVALUATION) ON HOW TO SUMMARIZE THE RESULTS OF THE ASSESSMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOW-UP

<p>2.3</p>	<p>Recommendation 3: The Evaluation Team recommends that the usability issue be re-evaluated by a Human-Computer Interface (HCI) expert group, as the sole focus of that evaluation, a topic that was beyond the scope or skill set of this Evaluation Team. An HCI group would evaluate the GEOSS user interface through a set of usability and ergonomics factors, with recommendations that could range from simple tweaks to wholesale redesign.</p>	<p>ADC Response: <i>UIC-sponsored annual user usability tests have been conducted on the GCI interfaces and capabilities that have resulted in updates to the GCI. HCI expert consultation would be welcome on the emerging user interface that will be developed as a result of the Sprint-to-Plenary activities, evaluating the evolution of GEOSS capabilities.</i></p> <p>EXCOM remarks: Given the finite resources available to GEO Members, EXCOM would prefer that available efforts are directed to strengthening support of the tasks set out in the 2012-2015 Work Plan, rather than creating new expert groups.</p>	<p>Update needed on what has been done post 2011 Plenary.</p>
<p>2.4</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: The Evaluation Team recommends that GEO undertake a pilot project to (1) implement a geospatial browser in the GCI that is capable of rendering thematic layers from GEO data holdings, (2) standardize a subset of GEO data holdings accessible through the</p>	<p>ADC Response: <i>The focus of the Sprint-to-Plenary effort is to streamline access to EO data. The user interface will include the capabilities of finding data based on a common EO vocabulary of observable properties, reaching into inventories of EO data, a geospatial browser to rendering select data resources, and identifying suitable helper applications to exploit EO data. This provides access to the majority of GEO data holdings that conform to data service practices and standards identified in the GEOSS documentation. These capabilities will be demonstrated in the 2011 Plenary and Exhibition.</i></p> <p>EXCOM remarks: EXCOM takes note that the issues identified during the 2011 evaluation are</p>	<p>Update may be necessary and could come from the relevant implementation board.</p>

	geospatial browser, (3) develop a way ahead so that the majority of GEO data holdings are accessible in this manner.	being addressed within the scope of the "Sprint to Plenary".	
2.5	<p>Recommendation 5:</p> <p>A Systems Engineering Working Group be established to revisit the efforts to date and map them to a defined Systems Engineering process, resulting in a plan of action for GEOSS implementation.</p>	<p>ADC Response: <i>The ADC has overseen the systems engineering activities for GEOSS, coordinating the implementation and outreach of subordinate activities: Architecture and Implementation Pilot, Sprint to Plenary, and GCI Coordination Team. The proposed work plan includes a design and coordination Task (IN-05) to continue this engineering work under the new Infrastructure area.</i></p> <p>EXCOM remarks: Given the finite resources available to GEO Members, EXCOM would prefer that available efforts are directed to strengthening support of the tasks set out in the 2012-2015 Work Plan, rather than creating new expert groups. EXCOM therefore takes note that it is currently proposed to address this issue through the task IN-05 in the 2012-2015 Work Plan.</p>	Any update would be appreciated from the relevant board.
2.6	<p>Recommendation 6:</p> <p>The Evaluation Team recommends that current generation technology be targeted for utilization by the Systems Engineering Working Group. The Team also recommends that GEO issue a policy requiring that all software in the GCI be made Open Source and available to GEO member organizations.</p>	<p>ADC Response: <i>Standards-based services and interfaces have been deployed within the GCI. Current generation technology and standards are being deployed in the GCI and by providers in direct result of the 2011 Sprint to Plenary effort. This includes Web 2.0 and 3.0 (semantic) capabilities, rapid application development (RAD), enabling ‘mash-ups’, and support of open search query APIs. All GCI software has been made available as open source.</i></p> <p>EXCOM remarks: EXCOM notes the statement from the ADC that standards-based services and interfaces are already used in the GCI. EXCOM acknowledges that the challenge of transitioning to new technologies will remain an ongoing action for GEO, even after the GEO-VIII Plenary. This will require continued work, which should be addressed through a proper structuring of the necessary tasks in the 2012-2015 Work Plan, including designing the process for the evolution of the GCI architecture.</p>	The Post 2015 working Group has identified the building of a “third generation” GEOSS information system as one of the strategic activities post 2015.
2.7	<p>Recommendation 7:</p> <p>Data retrieval, and the catalogue of archive data with</p>	<p>ADC Response: <i>Usability has been regularly re-assessed and improvements to the catalogue have been made in response. Improved end-user usability and the ability to search inventories (archive) are also being demonstrated for the</i></p>	This is ongoing.

	<p>metadata, should be improved to meet user requirements and needs.</p>	<p><i>Sprint to Plenary efforts and subsequent operational enhancements. A user request and comment system has been in-place to track and assign enhancements and bug fixes identified by users.</i></p> <p>EXCOM remarks: EXCOM takes note that the issues identified during the 2011 evaluation are being addressed within the scope of the "Sprint to Plenary".</p>	
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