

Report
30th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 14 January 2014
(As accepted at the 31st Executive Committee Meeting)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The meeting was chaired Mr Philemon Mjwara, the GEO Co-Chair representing the Republic of South Africa.

After approving the 30th Executive Committee agenda and the draft Summary Report of the 29th Executive Committee Meeting, the Committee reviewed all the documents for the GEO-X Plenary and Geneva Ministerial Summit. Highlights included:

- Recognition of Participating Organizations and Observers (Plenary Document 3) (*for consultation*):
 - **Outcome:** Executive Committee endorses candidates in Rev 3 PO and Observer Status.
30.1 Action: Secretariat with (representation from Executive Committee) to prepare a document describing a strategic approach to engagement with GEO, to include POs and Observers, with a view towards broader private sector engagement; applications to clarify contribution to GEOSS implementation and periodic review of contributions from Members and POs. [31 ExCom].
- Geneva Ministerial Summit Draft Agenda (Ministerial Document MS1):
 - **Outcome:** hierarchy for each Session: Ministers, Ministers' representatives, Heads of Delegations, Members, POs; and
 - Secretariat to confirm with Delegations during Plenary.
- Preparation of the next GEOSS Implementation Plan (Plenary Document 6):
 - **Outcome:** Caucuses may nominate up to three distinguished experts for the IPWG and two nominees for the writing team, subject to acceptance by the Executive Committee.
- 2013 Report of the Executive Committee (Plenary Document 12):
 - **Outcome:** Synthesis of Document 12 to highlight 3-4 points (e.g., governance), for a PowerPoint presentation to be presented at Plenary.
- Secretariat Operations Budget for 2014 (Plenary Document 15):
 - **Outcome:** After the presentation of the budget, the Chair will read the following intervention for insertion in the GEO-X meeting report:

"The Executive Committee appreciates the Secretariat's sound management of the GEO Trust Fund, and recommends the adoption of the GEO budget top line amount and major categories of expenditure for 2014 as prescribed by IPSAS. Plenary is

asked to concur with the ExCom request that the Secretariat, with the assistance of a budget subcommittee, develop an annex that provides greater detail of the programmatic elements and strategic directions of the Secretariat's annual expenditures, both planned and actual. The 2014 budget annex should be presented to the Executive Committee at their March 2014 meeting. This budget annex is designed to further build donor confidence in the financial arrangements for, and management of, GEO, and ultimately strengthen GEO's financial position."

30.2 Action: Secretariat to recast the 2014 budget to be presented at the next meeting of the Executive Committee with greater details of the programmatic elements and strategic directions of the Secretariat's annual expenditures.

- Management of GEO Trust Fund (Plenary Document 16):

- **Outcome:** highlight CHF 200K in presentation to Plenary; and
- Special initiatives: funds earmarked until balance is achieved.

- Adoption of Rules of Procedure (Plenary Document 18):

30.3 Action: The Secretariat to propose clarifications to the Rules of Procedure so as to accommodate flexibility in establishing Working Groups.

30.4 Action: Changes to the Rules of Procedure related to GEO's governance mechanisms/structure in the Post-2015 phase should be considered, in order to better enable all Members and Participating Organisations to contribute.

- Dates of future Meetings.

Secretariat Proposal:

- 31 ExCom: 11-12 March;
- The Executive Committee requested that the idea of a virtual meeting for the March ExCom be explored;
- 32 ExCom: 8-9 July; and
- 33 ExCom and GEO-XI to be decided off-line.

Meeting commenced at 09:00

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair representing South Africa, Philemon Mjwara. He noted that this Executive Committee would review the final documents and preparations for the GEO-X Plenary and Geneva Ministerial Summit where Ministers will be requested to endorse the Draft Declaration to extend GEO and GEOSS for a further period of 10 years.

The United States Co-Chair, Kathryn Sullivan, expressed her thanks to the Ministerial and Post-2015 Working Groups for their tremendous work in preparing for both the Plenary and Ministerial and the documents that will be presented at these events. This was echoed by Rudolf Strohmeier, the Co-Chair of the European Commission, and Liao Xiaohan, representing the Co-Chair of China. All four Co-Chairs unanimously expressed their gratitude to the host nation, Switzerland, for organizing the GEO Week, comprised of the meetings of the Executive Committee, Plenary, Ministerial and the many Side Events and Exhibition.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1)

The agenda was adopted without changes.

1.2 Approval of Summary Report of the 29th Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2)

UK requested a correction to item 6.1 Communications Strategy regarding the reference to the marketing jargon. The US provided a small correction to item 2.2.6. With these changes the report was approved.

1.3 Review of Actions from Previous Meetings (Document 3)

The Director of the Secretariat presented the document. The majority of the action items arose from the Executive Committee deliberations and guidance for documents to be presented at the forthcoming Plenary and Ministerial and, therefore, had been accomplished during the redrafting and preparation of these documents.

The Director of the Secretariat noted that Action item 29.7 regarding measures taken to ensure wide participation in the event had borne a good response. These measures, in addition to the favourable location of Geneva, had yielded more than 700 registrants for Plenary, and approximately 30 Ministers had indicated their participation in the Ministerial.

Action items 29.11, 29.15 and 29.16 all had delivery dates for later in the year and would be addressed at the next meeting.

The Chair concurred that the bulk of the actions would be taken up when the relevant documents were discussed during the meeting.

2 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS REPORT (DOCUMENT 4)

The Director of the Secretariat presented the Secretariat Operations Report. She described the Secretariat's participation in the preparations for the Plenary and Ministerial, and highlighted the work of Osamu Ochiai who worked closely with the GCI providers to bring the GCI preparations to their current level for the demonstration at Plenary, and Giovanni Rum for his leadership in coordinating the Plenary and Ministerial events. The Secretariat, along with the Swiss hosts, had organized two briefings for the International Community in Geneva, which consisted of UN and Specialized Agencies, Member country missions and International Governmental and Non-Governmental

Organizations. These briefings resulted in several countries, currently non-members, expressing their interest in joining GEO.

The Director of the Secretariat further noted the participation of the Secretariat in the launch of Afri-GEOSS in Addis Ababa and that at this occasion the Participating Organisations had expressed their appreciation of the support provided, and publically thanked Mr Phil Mjwara for his longtime support of GEO.

The Director of the Secretariat thanked China for the secondment of Ms Wenbo Chu, who took up her duties in the Secretariat in December 2013. She further thanked Brazil for the secondment of Mr Joao Soares, who returned to Brazil at the end of December. Georgia joined as the 90th Member in March and will be formally recognized at this Plenary; Ecuador will be present at this Plenary as an Observer. She noted that there will be a revision to the GEO-X Document 3 as the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) has requested Participating Organisation status.

Discussion:

The US appreciated the acknowledgement of the contribution of Ms Madelyn Appelbaum in the report and requested that her correct title be reflected as: Senior Communication Policy Official. They also requested clarification on the contributions of the Secretariat to the AfriGEOSS initiative to be distinguished from those efforts provided in the Region. The Director of the Secretariat noted that Mr Humbulani Mudau, during his time with the GEO Secretariat, and Mr Giovanni Rum, upon Humbulani's departure, have been the Secretariat focal points for AfriGEOSS. The launch of AfriGEOSS in Addis Ababa required a great deal of coordination both within the Secretariat and in Africa. The on-continent support was largely provided by Ms Lerato Senoko. Upon her arrival, Ms Andiswa Mlisa will assume responsibility for the Secretariat's role in AfriGEOSS. Lastly, she agreed that more distinction will be provided in future reports on the Secretariat's specific involvement.

3 REVIEW OF GEO-X AND SUMMIT DOCUMENTS (LISTED IN ORDER OF PLENARY AGENDA)

3.1 Draft Plenary Agenda (Plenary Document 1)

The Director of the Secretariat explained that Dr Karine Siegwart, the GEO Principal for Switzerland, will provide the welcome and opening remarks on behalf of the Swiss hosts. The US Co-Chair Dr Kathryn Sullivan will Chair the Plenary. Mr Elhousseine Gouaini of WMO Conference Services will assume the role of Conference Officer for Plenary and Ministerial. This service is provided to GEO under the Service Level Agreement with WMO. The Exhibition will be officially opened at the first coffee break.

The Chair cautioned that sufficient time should be allocated if it becomes necessary to re-work the Draft Declaration. It was agreed that should this become necessary, Mr Ezio Bussoletti of Italy and Co-Chair of the Ministerial Working Group (MWG), could be asked to lead a small working group. The Director of the Secretariat noted that Members and Participating Organizations registering their intent to give formal statements were informed of the constraint to remain within 3 minutes, and that the Secretariat had requested that visual cues would be provided by the Conference centre to aid in the time keeping.

The Director of the Secretariat explained that the High Level Panel discussion would take place in the Plenary room. The theme proposed was the role of Earth observations in addressing global environmental challenges with the views of national, regional and global leaders being expressed. The panel is comprised of: Mr Bruno Oberle, State Secretary for the Environment of Switzerland; Mr Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP);

Ms Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR); Professor Philippe Gillet, Acting President of the Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne (EPFL); and Serge Tröber, Chief Underwriting Officer Corporate Solutions, Swiss Re, and will be moderated by the Swiss GEO Principal, Dr Karine Seigwart, Vice Director of the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN). This is not intended to be a formal part of the Ministerial Summit, but it is hoped that Ministers already in town will engage in discussion.

3.2 Recognition of New Members (Plenary Document 2)

The Executive Committee noted the request of Georgia to be recognised as a Member of GEO. The Director of the Secretariat reminded the Committee that countries may request Membership provided their application is at the Ministerial level, and that they are currently a Member State of the United Nations. She noted that Ecuador had applied for Observer status at this Plenary.

3.3 Recognition of Participating Organizations and Observers (Plenary Document 3) (*for consultation*)

The Director of the Secretariat introduced this document. She explained that Creative Commons Organisation (CC) and Secure World Foundation (SWF) had requested Participating Organization status after a period of being Observers. The concerns voiced intersessionally on the applications of the International Astronautical Foundation (IAF) and International Union of GEODESY and Geophysics (IUGG) had been dealt with through informal discussions. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) had applied for Participating Organization status since the last meeting of the Executive Committee and also met the criteria.

Discussion:

The European Commission said that insufficient additional information on four of the eight applications had been provided to ExCom members since the preliminary discussion at the last ExCom. In some cases, no further information was received and, in addition, new applications were being tabled without a minimum consultation time being respected.

Russia voiced concern regarding the delay on the request for Observer status of the International Committee on the International Global Monitoring Aerospace System (IGMASS) Project Implementation, also known as ICPI. Some issues regarding the current membership of ICPI had been expressed intersessionally. The Executive Committee supported the proposal for Russia and China to discuss this issue before the next meeting.

The Director of the Secretariat stated that the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research (UCAR) request for Observer status had been removed from the slate due to concerns voiced at the previous meeting of the Executive Committee of the largely private sector and non-international status of the organisation. Australia highlighted that the criteria in the Rules of Procedure provide that Membership and Observer status can be requested for organisations that are International, and have a mandate in Earth observations or related activities. Australia proposed that a clearer process needed to be elaborated with a more strategic approach. Canada proposed that UCAR did, in fact, meet the membership criteria as it is an international institution, established in a way to allow for sharing of scientific assets, and is primarily supported by government funding and science foundations.

The Executive Committee agreed to reinstate UCAR as recommended for Observer status on the slate going forward to this Plenary.

In agreeing to accept all of the tabled applications, the Executive Committee requested that the Secretariat should prepare a document describing a strategic approach to engagement in GEO for Participating Organisations and Observers. This is to include a review mechanism of current Members and POs, which could take the form of a periodic re-application for membership.

Outcome:

- **Executive Committee endorsed candidates in Document 3 Rev 3 – PO and Observer Status.**

30.1 Action: Secretariat with (representation from Executive Committee) to prepare a document describing a strategic approach to engagement in GEO, to include POs and Observers, with a view towards broader private sector engagement; applications to clarify contributions to GEOSS implementation with periodic review of contributions from Members and POs. [ExCom 31]

3.4 Draft Report of GEO-IX (Plenary Document 4)

The Executive Committee had no comments on the Draft Report of GEO-IX. The Chair declared the report adopted.

3.5 Geneva Ministerial Summit Draft Agenda (Ministerial Document MS1)

The Executive Committee considered the timing and protocol of the Ministerial (Member States) and Participating Organization statements. The Chair raised concerns about the timing and the allocated time slots given the large number of Ministers who had indicated attendance. Japan questioned the order of the statements. The Director of the Secretariat indicated that the protocol was largely in the hands of the hosts (Switzerland) and it is to be expected that a head of a UN Organization would be considered at a Ministerial level and invited to speak before lower-ranking country representatives. Canada, supported by the US, said that although Geneva may be a UN city, GEO is not a UN Organization and, thus, a head of a UN Organisation cannot take precedence over a representative from a GEO Member country.

Canada raised the issue that while some countries may not have a Minister present, their representatives were mandated to speak on behalf of their Minister. UK supported Canada's view and suggested that Participating Organizations may provide a different view point and should therefore also be given the opportunity to speak on the Declaration. The EC agreed that priority must be given to Ministers and to country representatives to make statements in the morning session before the adoption of the Declaration. Canada agreed with the EC and felt that, as governments had gone through the process to brief their Ministers, they needed to be given priority in the morning session as the Declaration is a decision to be taken by Ministers. China agreed with the EC that priority should be given to Countries, and those who sent Ministers should be given higher priority in terms of position and time to speak. If time does not permit, Participating Organizations will have a lower priority.

The Chair proposed that the GEO Principal speaking on behalf of their Minister should be respected. In order to save time, the lunch break could be cut by 30 minutes and the morning session could carry into the afternoon if required. In the future, attention should be given to how best to give POs a meaningful voice in GEO.

Outcome:

- **Speaking Hierarchy for each Session as follows: - Ministers, Ministers' representatives, Heads of Delegations, Members, POs; and**
- **Secretariat to confirm with Delegations during Plenary.**

3.6 Vision for GEO 2025 (Ministerial Document MS2)

Mr Gilles Ollier presented this document, which had incorporated some minor changes. The document has been through several iterations and reflects the recommendations made in the Declaration.

The report was noted.

3.7 GEO Progress Report (Ministerial Document MS3)

Mr Bob Samors of the Secretariat presented this document, which had been designed, written and produced since the last meeting of the Executive Committee.

Discussion:

The EC Co-Chair thanked the Secretariat for the report, which had been produced following the request made by the EC. It was well prepared and succeeded in presenting the main GEO achievements over the past three years in an attractive way.

The Director of the Secretariat thanked Mr Bob Samors, the Secretariat Experts, Co-Chair representatives; Task PoC's and Leads for their hard work and input to the report in a short period of time. She noted the inclusion of the logos to acknowledge the contributions of the many contributors should ease concerns expressed in the past regarding adequate and appropriate credit to the contributing organizations.

The Co-Chair of South Africa, suggested the *Report on Progress* should be highlighted at the Ministerial. The Director of the Secretariat also announced that there were five video showcases to be shown during the Ministerial that highlighted progress made.

3.8 Ministerial Guidance on the Evolution of GEOSS (Ministerial Document MS4)

3.9 Preliminary Guidance for GEO 2025 (Plenary Document 5)

The Chair introduced these two documents. He explained that Document MS4 (Ministerial Document MS4) was intended to introduce a facilitated session at the Ministerial, whereas Document 5 (Preliminary Guidance for GEO 2025) was prepared for Plenary to provide additional guidance on the evolution of GEO and GEOSS to 2025.

The Executive Committee had previously agreed that Ministers would not want to come all the way to Geneva simply to approve the continuation of GEO, but to also advise on its future. Session 4 is seen as a session where Ministers are asked for input on how they believe GEO should evolve.

Discussion:

The EC agreed with the Chair and added that it would not be fair to ask Ministers to come to Geneva and comment on an already negotiated text, and that it was preferable that they be provided with the opportunity to give guidance for the future. The text is relatively short, so it can be read and adjusted accordingly.

Australia agreed with Canada and the EC that the Declaration is indeed the key aspect of the Ministerial but that other ideas may come out of the discussion. Australia looked forward to the discussion in terms of the content of the IPWG. Australia also suggested that strategic objectives need to be developed before starting work on the Implementation Plan. This session should collect high-level views, not details. Canada said that the message from governments needed to be delivered. Canada suggested focusing on how to solicit the high-level input and how best to use this information, how to capture what is important and who will act upon it. This message will be brought back to Ministers in 2015/16. It is important to understand the motivation of Members who become part of the GEO process, and to communicate that the multilateral efforts comprise an improvement of humanity.

The Chair encouraged the need to link with the outside world. It was important to communicate how GEO's added value can advance the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, how does climate change affect biodiversity, and how does that in turn, affect ecosystem health? Are Ministers comfortable with the way GEO is addressing current challenges? Or does the structure need to change

– with different partnerships, with the private sector? GEO post-2015 should be different, how do Ministers see this?

3.10 GEO Highlights Fact Sheet (Ministerial Document MS5)

The Secretariat was commended on producing a concise, clear and visually pleasing document.

The document was acknowledged.

3.11 Preparation of the next GEOSS Implementation Plan (Plenary Document 6)

The European Commission Co-Chair introduced this document, which was a joint proposal from the EC and US Co-Chairs following consultation with China and South Africa. Mr Strohmeier explained that the proposed process had been prepared in order to anticipate the expected adoption of the Ministerial Declaration and, in particular, the preparation of a new ten-year Implementation Plan. Translating the decisions of the Ministerial Summit into reality within the time constraints requires prompt action and the document had been prepared for this reason. It was proposed that the GEO Community would be central to the process with each Caucus being represented. It was intended to seek nominations immediately following the Plenary and that GEO Co-Chairs would propose the composition of the Working Group for final ratification by ExCom in March. The Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) working under the supervision of ExCom will produce an initial draft in time for the next Plenary. The GEO Secretariat would provide support to the Co-Chairs and to ExCom to ensure that the working group is established as rapidly as possible.

Discussion:

The UK thanked the EC and US for the document, agreed with the proposed approach and urged for Caucus nominations by mid-February. Japan also expressed its gratitude for the document and suggested that the process should be designed to include diverse opinions. To allow for this, they suggested increasing the number of nominations per caucus to up to three experts, and there should be an emphasis on the Participating Organizations in this work.

Australia encouraged that the initiative move quickly and also suggested strategic objectives be defined upfront. Australia noted that the last Implementation Plan activity required a retrofitting of strategic targets. Building on the lessons learnt from this period, the Terms of Reference of the IPWG should include this task.

Canada stated that the work to define the first Implementation Plan took place over five Plenary meetings. They proposed that this time the task should take into consideration two elements, firstly, the role of governments and the implications for resources, and, secondly, the role of the wider GEO community. It is important to specify, in advance, the expected outcomes and strategic objectives which should be presented and agreed upon at the next Plenary. The US agreed on the importance of defining the end result before defining the means. It is the role of governments to be clear on the end result and then it becomes necessary to engage appropriate expertise to design the most effective and intelligent means to reach those ends. It was agreed that the IPWG would have a new Terms of Reference.

Mr Strohmeier concluded by thanking members of ExCom for their interventions. The intention of the proposal was to produce a good end product. The idea is to involve the Community, not only a few stakeholders. It would be up to the Co-Chairs and ExCom to make the Group workable. While regional balance was desirable, the group can quickly get too big.

Outcome:

- **Caucuses may nominate up to three distinguished experts for the IPWG and up to two members of the Writing Team. The final composition will be proposed by the GEO Co-Chairs and will be subject to acceptance by ExCom.**

3.12 Draft Geneva Declaration (Ministerial Document MS6)

The Executive Committee noted that the Draft Geneva Declaration would be introduced at Plenary and, should it become necessary, a working group will be formed to re-work the document.

12:30 Lunch, Reconvened at 14:00

3.13 Assessment of Progress – Target and Task (Plenary Document 7)

The Director of the Secretariat stated that this document will be presented to Plenary in two parts. Part one will be presented by Mr Stuart Marsh, while Ms Alexia Massacand will present the Task progress part. The Executive Committee noted the document.

3.14 Fourth Evaluation of GEOSS Implementation (Plenary Document 8)**3.15 Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations (Plenary Document 9)**

The Director of the Secretariat stated that Mr John Adamec will present Documents 8 and 9.

The Chair raised a concern on the tracking of the recommendations made, and how to learn from the issues that consistently emerge from these evaluations. He questioned the take-home message from this document, and how to design a process whereby the Secretariat can take on board the recommendations. He noted that out of the 38 total recommendations; only two have unsatisfactory progress. It is also not clear how to deal with disputes.

The EC expressed concern with the way the report had explained the progress on the GCI. The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission felt that the rating was too severe. This element was classified as red, whereas a great deal of progress has been made in the latter part of 2013 and, therefore, the red rating is too negative.

Canada felt the benefits of these reports should be reinforced because they have resulted in the sharpening of the strategic objectives process. Follow-up has to be done, acknowledging the difficulties of doing so with an organisation that comprises so many contributors.

Australia noted the response prepared by the Executive Committee to the recommendations and felt that there are many experts to draw upon. They noted that the process is very diligent and moves GEO in a positive direction. Australia suggested that there are advantages of communicating this to a wider audience. A need was expressed to work more closely with the M&E WG on the review of strategic objectives and the definition of parameters on which to measure progress. Canada reinforced the objectivity of the assessments and, although not always positive, the point is to seek continuous improvement. The Executive Committee agreed on these broad principles.

3.16 GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan Update (Plenary Document 10)

The document was acknowledged.

3.17 AfriGEOSS (Plenary Document 11)

The Director of the Secretariat explained that this document will be presented to Plenary by Ms Andwisa Mlisa who will be seconded to the Secretariat for a period of two years from South Africa.

Discussion:

The Co-Chair from South Africa expressed his appreciation of the document which provides a fair assessment of the work produced. Nigeria expressed their gratitude to the Secretariat for the document and their appreciation of the contents of the report.

3.18 2013 Report of the Executive Committee (Plenary Document 12)

The preliminary report summarizing the 27th, 28th and 29th Executive Committee meetings was presented. The report will be finalized following the 30th Executive Committee. The Chair offered to present to Plenary the highlights of the report by focusing on several themes such as Governance, Participation in the Post-2015 and Ministerial planning process, and guidance provided to the Secretariat.

Outcome:

- **Synthesis of Document 12 to highlight 3-4 points (e.g., governance), for a PowerPoint presentation to be presented at Plenary.**

3.19 2012 Financial Statements and Report of the External Auditor (Plenary Document 13)

Ms Patricia Geddes presented this document, which will be presented to Plenary by the WMO Finance Department and External Auditors. She reminded the Executive Committee that this document had been presented to the Executive Committee in July and contained an unqualified, or clean, audit report.

3.20 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure 2013 (1 January to 31 December) (Plenary Document 14)

Ms Patricia Geddes presented a revision to this document that contained an interim report on Income and Expenditure for the period 1 January to 31 December 2013. She cautioned that the financial statements and reports for 2013 were not closed, but are provisionally showing a surplus of income over expenditure of around CHF 424K. Most of the pledges pertaining to 2013 have been received in the Trust Fund, with only an Australian pledge to GFOI and a pledge from Gabon outstanding. The Secretariat is working with both countries to facilitate the process of receiving these pledges.

Discussion:

The EC asked if it was the intention that the surplus of the CHF 424K would be put in the Working Capital Fund (WCF). Ms Geddes responded that an additional contribution of CHF 150K had been provided by Switzerland to offset additional expenditures relating to the Summit. Otherwise, yes, the balance can be earmarked for this purpose, pending the Plenary approval of the establishment of a WCF.

3.21 Secretariat Operations Budget for 2014 (Plenary Document 15)

Ms Patricia Geddes presented this document. She explained that this presentation of the budget contained the following differences from last year's presentation: introduction of separate funding detail of the GFOI Initiative (as requested by GEO-IX); introduction of the Working Capital Fund with the setting aside of CHF 200K from the expected savings from Fiscal Year 2013 (should the

establishment of this fund be approved by Plenary); and that the budget showed a balanced presentation of expected income and expenditure for the year.

Discussion:

The EC Co-Chair stated that he felt there was a problem in supporting a budget which contained so few details. They were aware that organizations similar to GEO (e.g., IPCC) included a more detailed presentation of the budget. There are some Member States that would be willing to increase their contribution to the Trust Fund, but before they ask for more donations, they need to better understand how the money is being spent. The budget, as presented, did not allow them to do this. There is also a need to be commensurate with ambition. GEO is moving towards a more ambitious level and it should follow that efforts need to be reinforced in dealing with the budget. Other institutions could serve as a model for more transparent budget presentations – i.e., explanations of what large budget items such as 'contractors' and 'support costs' represent, how salaries are linked to the Trust Fund, which travel is mandatory, what supplies are used for, etc. In normal, daily business, the EC is required to respond to these types of requests and to account for its spending. The EC understood that the Secretariat may require more resources to obtain this level of reporting and suggested that related costs should be presented. In conclusion, the EC said that there needed to be a step-change. There needs to be a link between the headings presented and how the money is actually spent. In order to facilitate new donors, such a budget needs to be supplied. It was not just a question of communication but having a more transparent budget would help in this respect. There is no sense in the present document of what informs the budget. The EC is in no way asking for the GEO SEC to go outside the audit standards but to complement them.

The US said that it had held discussions with the EC and generally agreed that this was a good time to review how the Secretariat presents its budget in an easier to understand manner with more detail. They understood the constraints of presenting the budget in accordance with IPSAS, but felt that greater budget detail was a good idea. They requested that the 2014 budget be recast and presented at the next meeting of the Executive Committee. The intention was to inspire donor confidence.

Australia fully endorsed the proposal that a fuller picture would provide a good outcome and a driver for Members to clearly see what they are getting for their money. Much of the detail required is already reported in the Secretariat Operations Report and, therefore, could be repeated here. The Director of the Secretariat suggested that it should be possible to align the presentation of the budget with the IPCC presentation. The current presentation reflects the reporting of the accounts under the IPSAS standard and contains a considerable amount of detail. She further suggested that a Budget subcommittee could oversee the process in advance of presenting the budget to the Plenary. This subcommittee could also provide guidance on a programmatic presentation of the budget.

Outcome:

- **After the presentation of the budget, the chair will read the following intervention for insertion in the GEO-X meeting report:**

"The Executive Committee appreciates the Secretariat's sound management of the GEO Trust Fund, and recommends the adoption of the GEO budget top line amount and major categories of expenditure for 2014 as prescribed by IPSAS. Plenary is asked to concur with the ExCom request that the Secretariat, with the assistance of a budget subcommittee, develop an annex that provides greater detail of the programmatic elements and strategic directions of the Secretariat's annual expenditures, both planned and actual. The 2014 budget annex should be presented to the Executive Committee at their March 2014 meeting. This budget annex is designed to further build donor confidence in the financial arrangements for, and management of, GEO, and ultimately strengthen GEO's financial position."

30.2 Action: Secretariat to recast the 2014 budget to be presented at the next meeting of the Executive Committee providing greater detail of the programmatic elements and strategic directions of the Secretariat's annual expenditure, both planned and actual.

3.22 Management of GEO Trust Fund (Plenary Document 16)

The Director of the Secretariat presented this document, which covered the establishment of a Working Capital Fund (WCF) and additional assessment rate for special initiatives.

Discussion:

The EC expressed appreciation that there was a surplus in 2014 and suggested that this presentation to Plenary should signal this as a first step towards funding the WCF, thus facilitating further contributions for this purpose. While being prepared to support the Working Capital Reserve, the EC further suggested that the fund should be capped at 1M CHF.

Australia stated that there may have already been an assessment rate applied to their funding of the GFOI initiative, which needed to be verified. However, they were in agreement with the principle of applying an additional assessment on special initiatives. Canada cautioned about the characterisation of the assessment rates, as this may engender a disincentive to invest in special initiatives. They suggested that funders of special initiatives may be encouraged to make an additional contribution to the General Trust Fund rather than applying a rate to earmarked funding, and that this scenario could be evaluated should resistance to the assessment rate arise.

Outcome:

- **Highlight CHF 200K in presentation on WCF to Plenary; and cap the WCF at CHF 1 million.**
- **Special initiatives: funds earmarked only until balance is achieved.**

3.23 Renewal of Implementation Board Membership (Plenary Document 17)

Ms Alexia Massacand presented this document. The Executive Committee noted this has been extensively discussed in previous meetings for its presentation to Plenary.

3.24 Adoption of Rules of Procedure (Plenary Document 18)

The Director of the Secretariat introduced this document. The changes reflected the discussions at previous Executive Committee meetings and included a change in the way time frames were characterised to include the notion of calendar weeks. The text relating to Private Sector Engagement under the section on the Trust Fund was deleted; the same text already appears in Annex F. There was also a change relating to naming only Permanent Working Groups in the Rules of Procedure.

Discussion:

The US proposed that the Rules of Procedure should foresee the setting up of working groups without the necessity to change the Rules of Procedure, which requires Plenary approval. Canada proposed that given the changing and growing nature of GEO Membership and Participating Organizations, and reflecting on past discussions regarding the principle of rotation in key committees/roles, a review of the Rules of Procedure could be the mechanism that provides an opportunity to: 1) review relationships, roles and responsibilities between the Executive Committee and Plenary; 2) consider membership and how to engage with Members; and 3) the best way to recognise contributions from Participating Organisations. For example, when GFCS was established, a Partner Advisory Committee was designed to provide a way of seeking input from a broad community while allowing GFCS to remain intergovernmental. Canada's recommendation was to use the next two meetings of Plenary to explore these issues. Australia agreed that the review of the Rules of Procedure would provide a

mechanism for this to happen. Stronger engagement with Participating Organisations should occur as part of the discussion of GEO Post-2015.

30.3 Action: The Secretariat to propose clarifications to the Rules of Procedure so as to accommodate flexibility in establishing Working Groups.

30.4 Action: Changes to the Rules of Procedure related to GEO's governance mechanisms/structure in the Post-2015 phase should be considered, in order to better enable all Members and Participating Organisations to contribute.

4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Dates of future Meetings

Secretariat Proposal:

- 31 ExCom: 11-12 March;
- 32 ExCom: 8-9 July; and
- 33 ExCom and GEO-XI to be decided off-line.

Discussion:

The Executive Committee requested that the idea of a virtual meeting for the March ExCom be explored.

4.2 The EC Co-Chair requested the Executive Committee's agreement to raise the issue of Radio Frequency Coordination (RFC) at Plenary. The Executive Committee agreed to this request. An agreed text would be prepared.

Meeting adjourned at 18:30

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30th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 14 January 2014

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