

Report
31st Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 8-9 July 2014
(As accepted at the 30th Executive Committee Meeting)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting was chaired by Rudolf Strohmeier, the GEO Co-Chair representing the European Commission.

- The Chair explained that the late change of the agenda, presented as a revision, is proposed to accommodate Agenda Item 4 - Development of the new GEOSS Implementation Plan - to facilitate the participation of the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) co-facilitator, Danielle Lacasse via video link from Canada;
- The Chair agreed to Australia's proposal, seconded by Gabon, to consider Agenda Item 6 - Principles of Governance and Oversight between Executive Committee and Secretariat (Document 10) - before Agenda Item 5 - Selection of the GEO Secretariat Director;
- The Draft Report of 30th Executive Committee was accepted, with proposed changes to page 9 (item 31.13) correction of spelling; page 16, correction of address and page 19, confirming the correct country name of "Korea, Republic of";
- The Chair noted that Action Items from the previous Executive Committee meeting would be closed pending satisfactory discussion of documents related to the Action Items;
- The Executive Committee noted that the 2013 Draft Report of the Executive Committee had been circulated to the Members on 14 February, no comments were received and therefore the Report was posted on the GEO Website as a final document.

2 GEO ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (DOCUMENT 7)

The Executive Committee considered the Draft Engagement Strategy Roadmap presented by the Secretariat. The Engagement strategy was presented in three sections: Communications, Private Sector Engagement and Resource Mobilization. The document built on the previous documents for the GEO-X Plenary and guidance received at Plenary and the Geneva Ministerial Summit. The Executive Committee felt that there was a need to strongly refine the key messages and intended audiences of the strategy. There was a concern that the Private Sector section required more definition and a more detailed roadmap on how to engage private companies, with an emphasis on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), as agreed at GEO-IX. The Executive Committee agreed that specific efforts to engage with the UN and other relevant International Organisations, particularly in reference to supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was a priority for the engagement strategy. The Executive Committee discussed initiating and/or strengthening efforts being made within the Caucuses, either in regard to engaging in, or co-organising, international events pertaining to the support of the SDGs and/or Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs). It was felt that the communications

elements of the strategy should also encapsulate these efforts to further raise awareness. The Executive Committee agreed on the need to clarify the types of engagements that would be appropriate between GEO and commercial industry and requested the Secretariat to develop an Options Paper on this topic for the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

Action 31.1: The Secretariat to recast the Engagement Strategy Roadmap to include strategic and policy elements on private sector engagement and to propose a revised definition of GEO's various external communities. Refined Roadmap will consider proposal made by Japan regarding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and include a common overall message and narrative targeted for specific stakeholder communities. (5 September 2014 with comments from Executive Committee by 19 September 2014). Secretariat to develop an Options Paper on this topic for the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

Action 31.2: Executive Committee members are requested to provide to the Secretariat examples of public/private mechanisms and/or arrangements before 31 July 2014. Proposal: Secretariat to send request for information on behalf of Executive Committee.

Action 31.3: The Caucuses are requested to provide to the Secretariat information on potential high-level 2015 events before 31 July 2014 to be included in the Engagement Strategy Roadmap. Proposal: Secretariat will send request for information on behalf of Executive Committee.

3 PLENARY REFLECTIONS AND PREPARATIONS

3.1 GEO-X and Ministerial Lessons Learned

The Secretariat Director presented an overview of the lessons learned from GEO-X Plenary and the Geneva Ministerial Summit. The event attracted the highest level of attendance to date. The Secretariat received positive feedback, in particular on the number and quality of the Side Events. The Exhibition was also well-received. The Executive Committee acknowledged that the event had been well-attended, but raised questions about the number of Ministers, Member countries and Participating Organisations present, and requested more information in this regard. The Executive Committee expressed some concern on the selection of high-level speakers at the event and requested that there be wider consultation at the Executive Committee level for future events. The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation to Switzerland for hosting the event.

3.2 GEO-XI Agenda and Preparations (Document 8)

The Executive Committee considered a presentation on the preparations for the GEO-XI Plenary. The presentation included an overview of Gabon's interest in hosting the event, the current status of the agenda, logistics and the communications plan. The Executive Committee requested to be provided a more elaborate communications plan for the Plenary that includes possible headline stories to attract media attention to the event. In view of the short timeframe before the start of the Plenary, the Secretariat was requested to present a revised plan to the Executive Committee by 5 September. The Executive Committee Members are requested to provide nominations for the Communications Task Force and any suggestions for keynote speaker(s) at the event.

3.3 GEO-XII and Ministerial Preparations

The Secretariat Director provided an overview of the past locations of the Ministerial Summits.

The Executive Committee agreed to look into possibilities of co-locating the GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial Summit in Paris with the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) event that is scheduled from 30 November to 11 December 2015.

Action 31.4: Secretariat to provide all logistical information for GEO-XI by 31 July 2014.

Action 31.5: The Executive Committee will communicate to the Secretariat its nominations for a GEO-XI Communications Task Force, and provide to the Secretariat examples of key GEO accomplishments in Africa by 31 July. The Executive Committee will further provide suggestions for potential keynote speakers for GEO-XI Plenary and related events. The Secretariat will revise the communication plan for GEO-XI and share it with the Executive Committee by 5 September. The plan will focus on specific key messages, and build on and/or showcase initiatives such as the African Water Cycle Coordination Initiative (AWCCI), the Gabon experience in applying satellite data to address societal challenges, and the potential to implement the same in neighboring countries.

Action 31.6: The Secretariat to provide by the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee the statistics on the attendance at GEO-X. This would include the names and number of Member Countries and Participating Organizations represented, as well as the number of individual attendees.

Action 31.7: The Executive Committee will convey its official thanks to Switzerland for hosting GEO-X Plenary and the Ministerial Summit. Proposal: Secretariat to forward a letter of appreciation signed by the four Co-Chairs.

Action 31.8: The Secretariat to call for nominations for the Ministerial Working Group for the 2015 Ministerial in advance of GEO-XI.

4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Executive Committee considered the Interim Report from the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) and the proposal for the revised draft Terms of Reference for the group. The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation for the Report, and thanked, in particular, the two co-facilitators: Danielle Lacasse (Canada) and Stuart Minchin (Australia). The Executive Committee provided the following guidance to the IPWG:

- 1) clarify definitions of information and knowledge and define the context in which they are used;
- 2) encourage the group to pose existential questions, respecting the strong guidance provided by the Ministers. The IPWG has been trying to operate between these two poles, and has found some definitions are constraining, but will be mindful that clarifying ‘who and what GEO is’ must be done;
- 3) include governance and the societal challenges in the Implementation Plan; and
- 4) characterize GEO’s alignment with other initiatives (e.g., Belmont Forum, Future Earth, GFCS, etc.).

The revised Terms of Reference for the group were approved.

5 PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT BETWEEN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND SECRETARIAT

The Executive Committee considered the document proposed and prepared by the European Commission and United States Co-Chairs. The document was designed to prompt discussion on the expectations and scope of activities of the Secretariat. The current Rules of Procedure are quite explicit and the question was raised on whether changes should be made. It was agreed that the views of both the Executive Committee and Secretariat would be sought, and that this topic would be included on the agenda of the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

Action 31.9: The Executive Committee Members, as well as the Secretariat, will answer a set of questions regarding principles of governance and oversight by 5 September 2014 to inform the discussion document (Secretariat suggests these questions are developed by the Co-Chairs). Questions

and responses will also be shared with the IPWG, with a request that the IPWG ultimately include Secretariat roles and responsibilities in its initial definition of the overall GEO governance structure. The preliminary outcome of these processes will be included for discussion during the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

6 SELECTION OF THE GEO SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR

This item was taken up in several closed sessions resulting in the decision to reappoint, without competition, the incumbent for another term. Italy abstained from this decision. See appendix for additional detail.

7 GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Target and Task Progress (Document 11)

The Executive Committee noted the report on Target and Task progress with appreciation.

7.2 Implementation Boards Report (Document 12)

The Executive Committee considered the report from the Implementation Boards. The Executive Committee noted that improvements to the communication and operating mechanisms of the Boards needed to be considered. This was also an element that should be considered within the IPWG process.

Action 31.10: Alessandro Annoni to prepare on behalf of all Implementation Boards a “to-do” list to improve the operating state of the Boards by 15 August 2014. The assessment of and input on the Board’s operating mechanisms and structures to be provided to the IPWG.

7.3 Update from Data Sharing Working Group

The Executive Committee noted with appreciation the work of the Data Sharing Working Group.

7.4 Report from Data Management Principles Task Force (Document 15)

The Executive Committee noted with appreciation the update from the Data Management Principles Task Force. It requested Members to provide answers to the questions posed on behalf of the Task Force in coordination with the Secretariat.

Action 31.11: The Executive Committee to provide feedback on the Data Management Policy questions by 31 August 2014 directly to Alessandro Annoni, co-chair of the Data Management Principles Task Force (DMPTF), with a copy to all Executive Committee members and the Secretariat.

Action 31.12: The Secretariat to ensure that matters in Agenda Items 2, 5 and 7 pertaining to Engagement Strategy, Governance and Oversight (Secretariat and Boards), Data Sharing and Data Management, should be coordinated with the Implementation Working Group (IPWG) and should be discussed by the Executive Committee and GEO-XI and GEO-XII Plenary, but any decisions should be finalized only at the end of 2015, as part of the next 10-Year Implementation Plan (2016-2025).

7.5 Renewal of Implementation Board Membership (Document 16)

The Executive Committee accepted the recommendations for the renewal of Board membership.

8 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

8.1 Presentation on 5th Evaluation Report - Climate, Weather and Water (Document 17)

The Executive Committee noted with appreciation the presentation of the 5th Evaluation and acknowledged the dedication of the team, in particular, that of Lars Ingolf Eide.

8.2 Preparations for Final Evaluation (Oral presentation)

Action 31.13: The Executive Committee to provide the Secretariat additional candidates to support the final Monitoring and Evaluation by 31 August 2014.

8.3 Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations (Oral presentation)

John Adamec informed the Executive Committee on the process for updating the document “Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS evaluations” for submittal to GEO-XI Plenary.

9 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

9.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 18)

The Executive Committee considered briefly the Secretariat Operations report. It requested that future reports include a list of the Special Services Agreements in use. Mission exact dates must also be indicated.

Action 31.14: The Secretariat to include in Annex of the Secretariat Operations Report all Special Services Agreements in use.

9.2 2013 Financial Statements and Report of the External Auditor (Document 19)

The Executive Committee noted the 2013 Financial Statements and the clean (unqualified) Audit Opinion from the Swiss National Auditors.

The overall financial status is sound. The Total assets have increased by CHF 0.4 m from CHF 2.9 m at 31 Dec 2012 (which included cash of CHF 2.6 m) to CHF 3.3 m (including cash of CHF 3.1 m). The total liabilities have decreased by CHF 0.3 m from CHF 0.9 m at 31 Dec 2012 to CHF 0.6 m (these liabilities are primarily for long-term employee benefits). As a result of the above changes in total assets and total liabilities, GEO Secretariat’s net assets increased by CHF 0.7 m during 2013, from CHF 2.0 m at 31 Dec 2012 to CHF 2.7 m. This represents the cash requirement for 10 months of operations. There was a surplus of CHF 0.4 m in 2013, compared to a deficit of CHF 0.2 m in 2012. (However, the 2.0 m carry over was maintained). The revenue of CHF 4.7 m in 2013 had increased from CHF 4.5 m in 2012.

The 2013 expenditure reached CHF 4.3 m, compared to CHF 4.8 m in 2012. The expenditure was well within budget of CHF 5.9 m.

As in previous years, it is difficult to align expenditures with actual income because of unpredictable timing and amount of contributions. The Audit concluded it would be helpful if this could be rectified.

Action 31.15: The Secretariat to provide the Executive Committee a report on the status of the implementation of Audit Recommendations at the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

9.3 Report 2014 of the Budget Working Group and adoption of the budgetary annexes (Document 20)

The Executive Committee considered with appreciation the report and work of the Budget Working Group. The Committee accepted the recommendation to adopt the 2014 budgetary annexes and agreed that the format of the document should be maintained for future presentations of the Budget.

Action 31.16: The Executive Committee to send a letter in advance of Plenary to GEO Members requesting identification of pledges for contributions to the GEO Trust Fund for the forthcoming year(s) at Plenary and/or in writing to the Secretariat in advance of the Plenary. Proposal: Letter to be sent on 2 October 2014 in conjunction with submission of documents for GEO-XI Plenary.

Action 31.17: The Budget Working Group to develop a proposal for the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee on options, conditions and/or criteria for the:

- Use of Special Services Agreements (SSAs), including consideration on thresholds;
- Secretariat travel budget;
- Budget line flexibility;
- Support to developing countries; and
- Revision of Budget Working Group Terms of Reference based on new assignments.

Action 31.18: The Secretariat to continue discussions with the World Meteorological Organization to renegotiate the 7% overhead on in-kind contributions and the increasing costs for ICT support.

9.4 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure (Document 21)

The Secretariat Director highlighted that the best practice of providing the Executive Committee with a revised prediction of year-end income and expenditure has again been included in this document. As can be seen in the document, there is a current deficit and some pledges have yet to be made known to the Secretariat.

Action 31.19: The Secretariat to reissue Document 21 - Interim Report on Income and Expenditure, by 31 July 2014 reflecting the current status of pledges and income.

9.5 Evaluation of applications of new Participating Organizations (Document 24)

The Executive committee considered the evaluation of applications of new Participating Organizations (POs). Concerns were raised on the over-abundance of POs (considering actual contributions) and on the proposal to recommend to Plenary to accept two applications from organizations in Africa. A request was made that further information be provided on those organizations, so it can be considered in advance of the next meeting.

Action 31.20: The Secretariat to provide additional information to Gabon for the two Participating Organization applicants from Africa by 31 July 2014. Gabon will provide the Secretariat with its recommendation (Proposal: Gabon response to Secretariat by 5 September 2014).

Action 31.21: The Secretariat to provide to Executive Committee recommendations for improved criteria and supporting documentation from PO applicants for the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Action 31.22: The Secretariat to propose restructuring of document presentation for Executive Committee meetings by 5 September 2014, for example:

- Documents presented «For discussion / Not for discussion», acknowledging that any Executive Committee Member may request that a «Not for discussion» document could be moved to the «For discussion» category.

Tuesday, 8 July 2014

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair representing the European Commission, Rudolf Strohmeier. The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming the new Members of the Executive Committee -- Colombia and Gabon -- and also welcomed back Italy as a previous Member. He noted that this meeting was the first meeting since the momentous decision taken at the Geneva Ministerial in January 2014 to extend GEO and GEOSS implementation for a further 10 years through 2025. He noted the important items on the agenda, including a presentation from the facilitators of the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG). The IPWG is at a critical place in the substance of its work and would therefore be looking for guidance to be presented at the GEO-XI Plenary, which is only four months away. He also noted the agenda items on the arrangements for the next Plenary, Role of the Secretariat, and the report of the Budget Working Group.

The Co-Chair representative of China, Li Jiahong, noted that representatives of the Asia-Oceania region had participated in the IPWG meeting and that the seventh GEOSS Asia-Pacific Symposium had successfully taken place in Japan. Under the framework of GEO, China is playing a role as a Service Node of the UN-ESCAP Regional Cooperative Mechanism on Drought Monitoring and Early Warning, and providing technical services to a pilot project in Mongolia. In addition, Tsinghua University is cooperating with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre to carry out the African remote sensing mapping work. On 4 June 2014, China released “2013 Report on Remote Sensing Monitoring of Global Ecosystem and Environment including “Growth Conditions of Global Terrestrial Vegetation”, “Large Terrestrial Surface Water Areas”, “Supply Situation of Maize, Rice, Wheat and Soybean” and “Urban and Rural Resident Land Cover Distribution between 2000-2010”. Data products of the report were released and shared, which provides the basic support for the study of environmental problems and decision-making of governments, research institutions and international organizations. China has officially launched the website of National Integrated Earth Observation Data Sharing Platform www.chinageoss.org, sharing services and data to global users. These include Chinese and international satellite data, disaster risk reduction datasets, and advanced information data series based on remote sensing data. China will host the 3rd meeting of the IPWG to be held in September. Before this meeting, China will host a symposium with representatives of Asia-Oceania GEO to discuss the development strategy of the next decade of the Asia-Oceania GEO portal.

The Co-Chair of South Africa, Phil Mjwara, welcomed the new Members Colombia and Gabon and welcomed back Italy. He stated that he was looking forward to receiving an update on the IPWG process, the GEO Engagement Strategy and the status on the completion of the current GEOSS Implementation Plan, which remained an important aspect of the work at hand.

The United States Co-Chair, Anne Castle, also welcomed the new Members Colombia and Gabon and welcomed back Italy. She also expressed her congratulations to Members and the Secretariat on the very successful Plenary and Ministerial that took place in Geneva in January. The success of the event was indicative of the good work over the previous nine years and that GEO is now in a situation to capitalize on this. She hoped for an accelerated trajectory to realize the vision of GEO. She noted many developments including those in the area of open access to data. She also thanked the European Commission for chairing this session.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1)

The Chair explained that the change in the agenda, presented as a revision, was proposed to accommodate Agenda Item 4 - Development of the New GEOSS Implementation Plan - to facilitate the participation of the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) co-facilitator, Danielle Lacasse, via video link from Canada.

The Chair agreed to a proposal from Australia, seconded by Gabon, to consider Agenda Item 6 - Principles of Governance and Oversight between Executive Committee and Secretariat (Document 10) - before Agenda Item 5 - Selection of the GEO Secretariat Director.

The agenda was adopted with these changes.

1.2 Draft Report of the 30th Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2)

The Draft Report of the 30th Executive Committee was accepted, with proposed changes to page 9 (item 30.13) correction of spelling; page 16, correction of address; and page 19, upon confirmation of the correct county name of “Korea, Republic of”.

1.3 Review of Actions from Previous Executive Committee Meetings (Document 3)

The Chair noted that closing Actions Items from the previous Executive Committee meeting would be done pending satisfactory discussion of documents related to those Action Items.

1.4 Status of 2013 Executive Committee Report (Document 4)

The Executive Committee noted that the 2013 Draft Report of the Executive Committee had been circulated to Members on 14 February, with no comments having been received. Therefore, the Report was posted on the GEO Website as a final document.

2 GEO ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY (DOCUMENT 7)

Robert Samors, GEO Secretariat, presented the Draft Engagement Strategy Roadmap. The document was presented in three parts: Communications, Private Sector Engagement and Resource Mobilization. Samors explained that the document built on the documents previously presented and guidance received at the two previous Plenaries and Geneva Ministerial Summit. It tried to capture the many new opportunities that have arisen, as well as building on the 80+hours of research conducted last year. Yoshiaki Kinoshita (Japan) provided further detail on the proposal for enhanced engagement with UN organizations, highlighting their domestic and international cooperation toward the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR-3) to be held in Sendai during March 2015. During his presentation, Japan proposed to publish leaflets and to hold events in order to show GEO achievements and the importance of Earth Observations, and to foster buy-in at a national level.

Discussion:

SA: Expressed their appreciation for the document. He stated that it was difficult to separate the communication and private sector engagement elements. He also cautioned on the word “Strategy” which meant different things to different people. He was expecting to see more detail on how the roadmap would be practically implemented.

He stressed the need to further refine the key messages specifically in regard to the Private Sector. He believes that engagement with the private sector may take the form of the current exploitation of the GPS grid. It is important to remain mindful of the mandate of GEO and how best to interact with the Private Sector.

He suggested targeting key organisations in a first phase, which would represent important stakeholders with political relevance and provide examples in the document. We need to remember what we want to do with the data – does GEO process the data or is this done elsewhere.

In summary, he appreciated the document, but felt there was a need to clarify “who we are?” and “who to target?”

China: China felt that the definition of Private Sector needed further refinement.

USA: Applauded the engagement work that had been undertaken to date. They noted that the Executive Committee had been asking for a GEO Communications plan for some time and a first draft was finally being presented. They commended the GEO Secretariat for having moved the ball forward. The United States appreciated the categorization of the three components, and acknowledged the importance of those pillars. They felt that the communications plan was ambitious, but rightly so. There was a need to capitalize on the progress of the last 10 years to take GEO to a new level. They felt that the message needed to concentrate on “who we are” and provide a clear description of the GEO vision. There is a need to clearly distinguish between GEO and GEOSS and not mix messages between the organisation and the product.

They also felt the communications plan should be further refined in close collaboration with the IPWG process.

Estonia: Supported the views of SA and China. They also supported the view of Japan, to firstly engage with the UN organisations and other International bodies, as this engagement is extremely relevant and necessary. In their opinion the voluntary nature of GEO does not provide the necessary resources for a global engagement. GEO can provide data and allow industry and other external partners to develop and provide services.

Japan: Stated that on the whole they appreciated the work done by the Secretariat. They agreed with the structure of the document. If we move forward, we should ask Members and POs to take on specific lead roles on specific actions. They stressed the importance of encouraging Members and POs to work with the GEO Secretariat to implement the actions outlined in this strategy, and the need to deliver to other communities the essential value of GEO in concise, clear language. Japan proposed to communicate with the geospatial information/geoinformatics community (UN geoinformatics society). They would like to see the sharing of information on those actions that propose that Earth Observations and Big Data are contributors to Societal Benefits. They explained that next week there was a preparatory meeting in Geneva on the WCDRR-3, and they would like to see the GEO Secretariat participate in these meetings to stress the importance of Earth Observations.

EC: Referred to the presentation of the Communications Strategy of the IPCC as a good example. The IPCC has been developing their Communication Strategy over the last two years and it may provide a suitable framework for GEO. However, they did feel that the present document provided a starting point. They felt that it was necessary, however, to better develop the framework in order to provide direction to the GEO Community with the first goal being to bring the GEO community together. The Private Sector engagement should provide more guidance on the kind of relationships GEO needs to build with the private sector.

The EC felt that the document needed to identify key messages while recognizing that GEO cannot do everything. They felt some messages were fragmented. It was recognized that the added-value was that the communications, private sector engagement and resource mobilization elements are interlinked and can be viewed as two sides of the same coin. The document, however, is not fully developed. The strategy should identify target audiences and formulate messages directed at those target audiences.

The EC further expressed their concern on the piecemeal approach with regard to the current private sector contacts. They warned that there may be competition concerns in speaking to some companies and not to others. They proposed the need for a clear policy to guide future engagements. In this regard they would like to reinforce the involvement of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and referred specifically to the Document "Engaging the Private Sector in the Implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS)" considered at GEO-IX which specifies the principles of 'neutrality' and 'transparency' among the proposed guidelines. The EC further added that the Executive Committee had not in fact endorsed what had resulted from the Think Tank event in 2013. There is also a need to think about the conditions we are accepting when engaging with the private sector. Since GEO's data policy is open – how do we ensure this is respected? Who remains

the owner of these data? Companies add value to these data to make a profit. A lot of money can be generated, so should not GEO think about imposing royalties on the data to generate funds for supporting, for example, *in-situ* networks? We need to think about how to engage the private sector in these aspects, and this needs to be endorsed first by the Executive Committee, before it is adopted broadly. We need to be more systematic in this regard, before we can endorse the Engagement Strategy.

The question of resources will depend on what we would like, and then we need to ensure that the resources are made available. This fits in with the work of the IPWG, hence the necessity to provide the IPWG with additional guidance. The document has provided a lot of food for thought, which is appreciated. It is now necessary to provide a more concrete path forward.

Italy: Shares opinions of EC and SA on the evaluation of the work done and to be done for communication and the private sector. They would like to point out that care must be taken with Participating Organizations. There is currently an over-abundance of POs and it is likely that they may become more numerous than Members, yet their contributions are poor. Governments still fundamentally drive GEO. The real problem is how to increase the political weight of GEO, which presently is still not significant. We have encountered this situation for many years, but GEO has been negligent in increasing its visibility and political weight. There are few people who have a full vision of GEO, and there is generally a lack of political commitment at high levels in Member States. The private sector is also a problem, and we need to be clear on its definition. There are sections in the paper that do not address private sector though they are indicated as such. For example, the UN is mentioned twice in this section but they are not the private sector. We have to take a lot of care to use correct words and definitions.

We have been discussing strategies and roadmaps for the last two years, however there have been no actions or implementation. There have been no actions taken for these new directions. The strategy presentation is very general, applicable to every kind of subject without any specific address to GEO. The Appathon is an interesting idea, but the European caucus was not informed. It is important to note that the resultant applications will become private after 6 months of use, and access will have a cost, this is not in the spirit of GEO and has never occurred before. We note also that the communication strategy was presented the first time by a consultant in October 2013, and yet we are still discussing it without any concrete action taken.

US: Expanded on their previous comments. From the US perspective, they were glad to see progress that has been made and relationship building that has occurred since the Private Sector Think Tank. The Think Tank was the result of repeated direction from the Executive Committee and Plenary to determine a Private Sector strategy. Their impression was the Think Tank provided valuable insight to help formulate the Engagement Strategy, and create contacts that are now yielding significant results. The Appathon is a great idea to generate interest and to provide incentive to develop use cases.

The US agreed with the chair's suggestion that it would be useful to have basic principles outlined on which we wish to build the private sector engagement. Should there be the free provision of data, what are the terms of engagement? They noted that Japan's proposal is entirely consistent with this. The US wished to provide a contrary view to some of what has been said. Ten years and we still don't have an engagement strategy -- we can find fault with what has been presented, but we must start somewhere, and take advantage of the opportunities that arise. We can seek to formulate guidelines, with geographic balance, but we must start somewhere. The draft communication plan embodies concrete actions that can be taken that will lead to both greater recognition for GEO, and provide additional material for action. We can benefit from additional thought to ensure our message is more cohesive, but we should not sacrifice taking action now over issues that have been discussed for 10 years.

The Secretariat Director expressed appreciation for the comments, and proposed some next steps: First, to make the message clearer. GEO has struggled with this – in fact, even the Ministerial declaration subtitle was debated at the last minute. This document tried to identify the key messages

that cut across the entire GEO community -- Earth Observations are essential for decision-making. What we learned from the Think Tank is that one size does not fit all. Other than ‘making Earth Observations essential’, each sector may need a different message. It is unrealistic to assume that one message will suit the entire commercial sector.

We have been opportunistic in relation to the companies with which we have initiated discussions, largely due to the limited number of staff resources and time. We have spoken with everyone who has approached us, and the message has always been the same - data in the GCI is open to everyone: citizens, UN organizations, companies, etc. We have not considered implementing royalties because the data in the GCI is not GEO’s data, it belongs to ESA, JAXA, NASA, NOAA, Germany, etc. GEO’s task is to make the data open and accessible to everyone. GEO does not change what individual Member States are doing. Now, we have not received much feedback on the Resource Mobilization section of the strategy. Participating Organizations generally do not give money, but one has provided in-kind resources through a secondment. We need to leverage the coordination work already happening within Participating Organizations. We have approached the Development Banks (WB, AfDB, etc.). They are interested in using GEO to refine investment strategies, and although these resources may not come to GEO directly, they will contribute to capacity building efforts globally. The Foundations, on the other hand, may be the areas that are most ripe for resource mobilization. Do you as the Executive Committee want to propose to Plenary that we accept resources from Foundations? We are not likely going to get any money from UN organizations. GEO does not have an entrée into many UN venues, as anything other than an Observer, but we can carry the message that Earth Observations are essential to decision making through Members and Participating Organisations. This strategy refers back to work done at the Brazil Plenary. We realize this is not GEO’s first foray into the private sector issue. The guidance received from Plenary is that if one wants to grow the economy and ensure that Earth Observations are used, one must talk to the private sector to get them involved and find out what they need to generate value-added products and services which will ultimately grow the economy through the creation of jobs.

Italy: Suggested that the term Earth observations alone not be used, as it is generally perceived as referring only to observations from space; using “Integrated Earth Observations” avoids making this mistake and provides the correct message.

EC: Feels we need a clear discussion and better cooperation within the caucuses. The Appathon has received a donation from USAID. However the EC has published a similar activity that will be carried out by JRC. It will be open to the private sector and €1.2M has been allocated for the development of apps. With improved coordination these two activities could have been merged and made both more powerful.

Russia: Feels that there is no doubt that the problems are comprehensive and not easy to solve. Private sector engagement is not easy to define. However the document contains a lot of useful information for next steps to define the role of private sector engagement for resource mobilization. It is not an easy problem to solve. At the national level, they are trying to request funds to support projects, but cannot request resources be targeted for GEO projects because there is no single government body responsible for GEO, only. In Russia, there are many government bodies that participate in GEO. There are resources targeted and received by and for meteorological services, which could potentially be used for a GEO activity. These would be not only for space observations, but also for *in-situ* observations. There is a need to build on the work presented in this document, and to keep all necessary details in mind pertaining to differences at the national level.

South Korea: felt that communication on the new roadmap is important. The new GEO Web portal is good idea, but needs to be developed to be more user-friendly.

EC: Recalled that the document presented at the GEO-IX Plenary (Brazil) states an implicit invitation to engage with the private sector, and that it is expected that Members and POs will mainly interact

with companies and associations of private sectors companies. He also recalled the undertaking to organise a Private Sector forum.

Secretariat Director: The Secretariat has done exactly this in Europe with EARSC, and has similarly invited entities from Africa (AARSE) and the US in order to comply with this guidance from Brazil. In terms of holding a private-sector forum, the advice we received from the Think Tank was to target sectors, rather than hold a large forum. We did conduct a one day private-sector forum in advance of the Geospatial World Forum in Geneva (May 2014).

Chair: In conclusion we appreciate having the three elements of communication, private sector engagement, and resource mobilization put together. Nevertheless, there is a need to come back with a revised version of the document that focuses on the communication part more in the way that has been stressed by several colleagues during this meeting. What messages do we want to give to whom? In this regard, we should take up the Japanese example and consider expanding it – our task is to query each caucus for any events suitable for communicating and promoting GEO messages through 2015. The Secretariat should present a list of high-visibility events across all sectors so we can introduce a GEO reference to increase visibility. There is also a need to continue with the private sector involvement.

Colombia: We have a good example of public-private sector involvement. IDEAM and the Ministry of Environment are working with a petrol company; this is a private sector enterprise but follows public sector processes. ECOPETROL follows IDEAM's lead by using official information on ecosystems and forest cover.

Chair: Thanked Colombia for this intervention. We must not stop the private sector dialogue, but better frame it. We would like a document that frames discussion with individual companies, avoiding exposure to competition law, in line with the GEO-IX Plenary Document 14 – Engaging the Private Sector in the Implementation of GEOSS, and with neutrality and transparency, which will help to decide on principles. There is a need to speak with companies in a way that does not expose us. It would be helpful to propose a definition on how we would like to deal with contributions/royalties from companies. This is one element for the Secretariat to think about, mindful that we cannot speak about controlling GEO data, but providing access to it. What kind of policy do we want to have? GEO's approach is that data is shared among all, and is free, or only to those who contribute to the production of the data? This will determine to what extent the private sector can participate. The resource mobilization part will depend on the communication strategy, as there will be trade-offs. We have to know what we want.

Secretariat Director: This may be somewhat of a cart and horse issue. The policy framework needs to be established, so that the budgeting process can be aligned with it.

SA: Felt that there is a consensus on the need to raise the profile of GEO with the private sector. There is a need for a framework from the Secretariat on how to do this. The message that Earth observations are essential is too generic. What does this mean? We should have a targeted message, if we miss the boat on engagement with Sustainable Development Goals we may as well hang it up.

EC: Stressed the need to have one narrative with targeted messages, which incorporates the need to have a political message that illustrates to which extent we can contribute to the political objectives.

Italy: Felt that there was a need to restrict the attendance at conferences, favouring the quality over quantity, and rather try to attract the right level of decision-makers and stakeholders. Otherwise we get lost in meetings without any concrete outputs.

US: Suggested an addition to the requested summary, with regard to private sector involvement, that it would be helpful to have more specific definitions of the private sector. The resource mobilization section should also include foreign assistance agencies (e.g., USAID, JICA, UK's DFID) as potential partners. The revised Engagement Strategy should be reviewed in advance of the November Plenary.

The United States encouraged all Members who made interventions and requests for a revision to definitions of private sector to make a commitment here to engage with the Secretariat on the revision.

Action 31.1: The Secretariat to recast the Engagement Strategy Roadmap to include strategic and policy elements on private sector engagement and to propose a revised definition of GEO's various external communities. Refined Roadmap will consider proposal made by Japan regarding Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and include a common overall message and narrative targeted for specific stakeholder communities. (5 September 2014 with comments from Executive Committee by 19 September 2014). Secretariat to develop an Options Paper on this topic for the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

Action 31.2: Executive Committee members are requested to provide to the Secretariat examples of public/private mechanisms and/or arrangements before 31 July 2014. Proposal: Secretariat to send request for information on behalf of Executive Committee.

Action 31.3: The Caucuses are requested to provide to the Secretariat information on potential high-level 2015 events before 31 July 2014 to be included in the Engagement Strategy Roadmap. Proposal: Secretariat will send request for information on behalf of Executive Committee.

3 PLENARY REFLECTIONS AND PREPARATIONS

3.1 GEO-X and Ministerial Lessons Learned

The Secretariat Director presented an overview of the lessons learned from the GEO-X Plenary and the Ministerial Summit. The event had attracted the highest level of attendance to date for any of the previous meetings. There was positive feedback on the number and quality of the Side Events, and the Exhibition similarly received good feedback. There were some criticisms on the amount of paper used, and it was suggested that we try to reduce the amount of promotional material printed for the meetings. It was also suggested that for future events, dry runs of the major transition points be made. This would help avoid misunderstandings in terms of who needs to be where.

EC: The Chair thanked the Secretariat Director for her presentation.

Discussion:

Italy: Requested to see the number of the Participating Organization attendance, as usually no more than 25% attend. Italy also stated that he had not seen the final draft minutes that must, as indicated in the Rules of Procedure, be distributed eight weeks after the meeting. Italy agreed there was too much paper, and that the meeting resembled a typical UN meeting. They cautioned that commitment would be reduced if this was not rectified. Italy expressed concern with the choice of high-level speakers, and was dismayed that some of the representatives did not stay as intended for the high-level segment. They suggested that the Executive Committee make the choice of guest speakers in the future. Italy also expressed concern that 2nd order Participating Organizations were being admitted when their umbrella or parent organization is already involved. He suggested a more restrictive policy be adopted for future Participating Organizations.

SA: Did not recall seeing that many Ministers attended and questioned the value added. There is a need to agree on the principles for the Statements and evaluate the time allotted to making the Statements. They thought the communications and handling of the Ministers could have been done more effectively. The Executive Committee Co-Chairs could be used more effectively to communicate important messages. The cancellation of the press interview on the last day could have been handled better.

EC: Asked why the appropriate political level was not reached out to. They find it regrettable that we have not reached out to the right person to attract enough spotlight and international press. They regret that the Executive Committee was not consulted on the choice of keynote speakers, as visibility is

important for us and the use of a personality could have been a trigger. They felt a need to improve the mixture of Side Events, and shared the feeling that they may have been overdone. There was not a clear structure in the end of Participating Organisations and Members, and there was too much taking place at the same time. There is a need to be more attentive and proactive, and start much earlier in talking to the media. They are looking now to Gabon – this is a moment for Africa and asked what is being done to attract media. They also agreed on the need to reflect upon why so many countries did not show up. Ministers do not travel unless there is something important for him/her to do. There is a need to organize business for them and make use of the location, a regional cadre of Ministers.

US: Felt it was important to recognize the successes, as well as take on constructive criticisms. They expressed appreciation for the can-do spirit of the Secretariat. There was some confusion around what version of the documents were being used and some last-minute coordination issues that generally happen with packed meetings.

Secretariat Director: Commented on the attendance of one Prime Minister (Madagascar), otherwise the Ministers, Vice Ministers and Deputy Ministers were invited to speak as per their title and protocol standards. The Panel discussion that took place the afternoon before the Ministerial was designed to give the Ministers a high-level event to attend before the Summit. This was an attempt to offset the more procedural meeting the following day. She reminded the Committee that the Ministerial Working Group was heavily involved in the agenda setting for the Summit. We had heard from the press in Europe and North America that to renew GEO's mandate was not of particular note in and of itself, and that they were expecting Members to make key announcements at the Summit. Content (or lack thereof) was, therefore, an issue for the meeting.

Chair: The Executive Committee appreciated and expressed gratitude to the Swiss hosts for contributing to the event and wished this to be conveyed to them officially.

3.2 GEO-XI Agenda and Preparations (Document 8)

Etienne Massard, Director of AGEOS (Gabonese Space Agency) and Secretary General of the Office of the President of Gabon, made a presentation on Gabon's invitation to the GEO-XI Plenary. He stated that the GEO Plenary is of utmost importance for the rest of Africa, and it provides Africa an opportunity to become more engaged as far as Earth observations are concerned. Earth observations can have an influential role in diverse aspects of environmental governance, such as illegal fishing and piracy, which are two major concerns for the region. With the GEO portal now operational, Gabon is looking forward to contributing data to GEOSS.

It is important to demonstrate to the public that Gabon is on the right path and using satellite data in everyday life. Gabon has a strategy to engage with its neighbours to help them use Earth observations to manage their natural resources. The best protection for these resources is to provide governments with the necessary tools to manage their country in a sustainable way. It is Etienne Massard's belief that Earth observations are one of the best ways to establish democracy. They can provide an important verification on the efficient and effective use of natural resources. There is a big role for GEO to play here.

This year AGEOS will be opening a new AGEOS facility, which should be inaugurated shortly before the Plenary. The Plenary will, therefore, provide Gabon an opportunity to showcase this development, which represents a major increase in Africa's capabilities in the domain of Earth observations, filling a major current gap in continental coverage.

Chair: Thanked Gabon for the presentation. He stated that the Plenary will also give GEO a unique chance to promote Africa. He requested that logistical information be released prior to the summer break. He stressed the need to consider how to market this information in the most efficient way, and also how to facilitate events once there.

Patricia Geddes, GEO Secretariat, provided an overview of the current status of the logistics for the GEO-XI Plenary. She stated that no further call for Side Events and Exhibits would be made, as sufficient requests had been received.

Robert Samors, GEO Secretariat, provided an overview of the current status of the communications plan for the Gabon Plenary. It included the Mission Briefing scheduled for Wednesday 9 July to which all Executive Committee members are invited. Andiswa Mlisa was commended for her work to engage all African missions here in Geneva. A communications group is being formed, and each Caucus is welcome to nominate a communications expert to the group. To date, Gabon and the US have nominated experts. Input to the narrative, the renewed need to identify compelling examples of GEO innovation, and tools or information specifically for Africa, was requested. The Executive Committee will be asked for any suggestions for keynote speakers before the summer holidays.

Discussion:

EC: Noted that they would have expected the communication plan to be more advanced by now, and they are willing to contribute to the effort. The AGEOS facility opening is a major point on which to build. With the Plenary less than four months away, we need to fully support the effort and identify the top stories as soon as possible.

SA: Suggested to work with Andiswa Mlisa of the Secretariat to map African initiatives that could contribute to GEO.

Gabon: Suggested that GEO will have an opportunity to show African countries how Earth observations can be better utilized to help solve environmental issues in the developing world. The results of recent studies on forest cover change have increased support tremendously, and have demonstrated what can be done with satellite data. Concrete examples, like landcover change are essential. Earth observations are often seen as something for other countries, but he would like to see Earth observations become as prevalent in Africa as mobile phones. It is important to have one's own capacity, and capabilities in Africa – not from elsewhere. We would like one result from the Gabon Plenary - that our neighbours say, "Yes, we can also do that." – this will boost membership in GEO.

US: Recalled that we have historically struggled with engaging developing countries in truly meaningful ways. It may be worthwhile to organize a Side Event focused solely on developing countries in Africa to describe the kinds of uses being made of Earth observations; describing the possibilities with an end goal of determining how best Earth observations can help developing countries and strengthen their capabilities.

Italy: Italy has supported countries such as Kenya with a ground station at Malindi. This is a positive example that could serve as a model for other areas. Italy could propose to support Gabon, by showing what worked and what did not in Malindi. This could also help encourage Kenya to join GEO.

The Secretariat Director requested the Executive Committee to provide any input they see fit in terms of identifying key stories for Africa.

EC: Explained that they would have expected that the Executive Committee be presented with some stories, and then make a decision on which ones to pursue. A communication strategy starts with the message to be delivered, or stories grouped into a narrative. This would have been expected by now so that feedback could have been sought from African colleagues, to know what would work best. The lack of preparation is preventing this. There is a need to agree on the headline message.

Gabon: Gabon asks questions, but also has solutions. They have a strong public-private partnership with Telespazio for monitoring oil platforms, and also with Cosmo SkyMed. We can show how this works at the Plenary in Gabon, and hope other countries will do the same thing. Our objective is to demonstrate how this governance model works – it is an African initiative which is important for us.

SA: The Executive Committee should consider reviewing again the communications plan as suggested. We would expect a revised draft to be circulated in a couple of weeks and then comments

to be provided back to the Secretariat. For example, Japan has been very strong with the African Water Cycle Coordination Initiative (AWCCI), and there are surely others who may assist so that within six weeks the plan is fully developed.

Chair: Supported SA proposal and agreed that inputs should be provided to the Secretariat for a revised communication plan by the end of July, so that the revised document will be circulated to the Executive Committee with a deadline of early September.

3.3 GEO-XII and Ministerial Preparations

The Secretariat Director provided an overview of the past locations of the Ministerial Summits.

EC: Suggested that the arrangements for Summit preparation and the formation of a Working Group should start now. A meeting of this group could be convened at the Plenary in Gabon. EC further suggested that as there will be an UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) meeting in Paris in late 2015; it may be convenient to co-locate the GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial in Paris. The EC will look into these possibilities.

Action 31.4: Secretariat to provide all logistical information for GEO-XI by 31 July 2014.

Action 31.5: The Executive Committee will communicate to the Secretariat its nominations for a GEO-XI Communications Task Force, and provide to the Secretariat examples of key GEO accomplishments in Africa by 31 July. The Executive Committee will further provide suggestions for keynote speakers for GEO-XI Plenary and related events. The Secretariat will revise the communication plan for GEO-XI and share it with the Executive Committee by 5 September. The plan will focus on specific key messages, and build on and/or showcase initiatives such as the African Water Cycle Coordination Initiative (AWCCI), the Gabon experience in applying satellite data to address societal challenges, and the potential to implement the same in neighboring countries.

Action 31.6: The Secretariat to provide by the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee the statistics on the attendance at GEO-X. This would include the names and number of Member Countries and Participating Organizations represented, as well as the number of individual attendees.

Action 31.7: The Executive Committee will convey its official thanks to Switzerland for hosting GEO-X Plenary and the Ministerial Summit. Proposal: Secretariat to forward a letter of appreciation signed by the four Co-Chairs.

Action 31.8: The Secretariat to call for nominations for the Ministerial Working Group for the 2015 Ministerial in advance of GEO-XI.

4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Update from Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG)

Interim Report of the IPWG (Document 5)

Danielle Lacasse, co-facilitator of the IPWG presented this document via video conference. Stuart Minchin, co-facilitator of the IPWG, assisted by teleconference. Ms. Lacasse highlighted the IPWG request to the Executive Committee seeking approval to revisit concepts and definitions as necessary.

Discussion:

Australia: Questioned whether there was an overlap with the GEO Engagement Strategy and the work performed by the IPWG. She also noted that there is confusion between GEO and GEOSS, and how better to discern differences.

Ms. Lacasse: Stated that from an engagement perspective, the IPWG wants to align with other initiatives. They are aware of the proposed Engagement Strategy, particularly for the private sector and will ensure that this material is reviewed.

Chair: Stated that the issue at hand is - how does the Executive Committee provide strategic guidance into the IPWG work? In a broader context the IPWG has already started discussions, but requires guidance and refinements from the Executive Committee.

US: Expressed their appreciation of the work of the co-facilitators for their comprehensive document that was accomplished in a short amount of time. The document demonstrates that consultation within the GEO community has taken place, which adds to the strength of document. The US would like to make a few suggestions. There appears to a confusion by the segregation of knowledge and information – how are these defined? What is the distinction between the two categories?

Also, as we consider the second decade of GEO, there are other initiatives emerging with similar mandates. How do we connect with these other initiatives and leverage them? For example Future Earth, UNGGIM and GFCS did not exist when GEO started. How do we, or are we, working with them? The fine tuning of the Implementation Plan will benefit from the Engagement Strategy. The US wishes to have a more strategic message. There is also a need to consult with the Data Sharing Working Group (DSWG) to ensure that there is adequate communication between the groups. The US also agrees that in the next phase, it would be good to draw a greater distinction between GEO and GEOSS.

SA: Echoed the appreciation to the co-facilitators for rapidly producing the document. They found that the document was helpful in organizing their thinking. Firstly, something to reflect on is how we define GEO – are we sure what being a knowledge broker really means? Secondly, one of our successful initiatives is GEOGLAM where we have engaged Ministers of Agriculture. They have asked specific questions about combining Earth observations with data from economic and social strata to provide answers to specific questions. In this example, they perceive GEO's role as to supply data, then the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) processes the information for its needs. This is a similar situation for GEO BON. Until such time as we consider this, we will never really know who we are; somewhere between being an adapter and a user. We are also aware that Future Earth is undertaking efforts to fuse data – how do we engage with them? How do we make sure we know what is available and describe the role GEO should take? Thirdly, we would never use a car to go from SA to Beijing, are we expecting a Rolls Royce with a big data component? Lastly, most people in GEO are not working full time – who is? Are we underusing the potential that we have in the Secretariat?

EC: Also thanked the co-facilitators for their efforts. They particularly appreciate Section 3 of the document and would like to see it evolve into an outline for an operational plan that could be endorsed by Plenary. The IPWG should work on the basis of what has been agreed at the highest level. They also noted that the decisions taken at GEO-X in relation to societal challenges have not yet been addressed in the “Destination 2025” part of the report.

The EC further encouraged reflection on the role of the Executive Committee and the GEO Secretariat. They would like to draw attention to this so the next Implementation Plan can be a robust multi-annual plan for implementing GEOSS, so that communities can react to and adhere to the plan. Climate services are being addressed in the European Commission in relation to Copernicus. There are a wealth of services provided by national governments and the private sector; there are different layers, which should complement each other in a cascading fashion. Overall, Earth observations should generate growth, jobs, and wealth – both in terms of direct jobs and through downstream services. We will be extremely proud the day that Price Waterhouse uses GEO to support a company.

China: Expressed their appreciation for the work of the IPWG. They agreed with the analysis and proposal discussed. They suggested that GEO member countries should contribute proportionate to their capabilities. They would like to see countries with satellite capabilities share data and integrate

the space-based data with *in-situ* observations. Software for developing applications across all SBAs would create virtual constellations across the SBAs as needed, and could address issues at global, regional and national scales. GEO products should not be distributed to decision-makers directly, but rather to those who can use them to perform the analyses – this will ultimately increase the economic return. National and regional GEO mechanisms should be encouraged. China is offering to host the 3rd IPWG face-to-face meeting. They would like to see an increase in the involvement of Oceania countries in development of the next Implementation Plan.

Japan: Expressed their appreciation of the work of the co-facilitators and fully support the work done. They support the earlier comments made on the Belmont Forum and Future Earth. They have met with the Future Earth Secretariat, which expressed interest in working with GEO. With regard to e-infrastructure, we have asked Professor Toshio Koike to join the project; he introduced the DIAS project as a system connected to GCI and is now one of the leaders in the e-infrastructure group. He will guide Japan's achievements within Belmont Forum.

US: Questioned if the IPWG felt that the direction that has been given is too constraining?

Ms. Lacasse: Thanked the Executive Committee for their advice and comments. This was summarized as follows:

- 1) clarify definitions of information and knowledge;
- 2) encourage the group to pose existential questions, respecting guidance provided by the Ministers. The IPWG has been trying to operate between these two poles, and has found some definitions are constraining, but will be mindful that clarifying who and what GEO is must be done;
- 3) include governance and the societal challenges in the Implementation Plan; and
- 4) define the distinct operating space of GEO, particularly vis-à-vis other international initiatives (e.g., GFCS, UNGGIM, Belmont Forum, Future Earth).

The Executive Committee did not have any major show-stoppers (i.e., indication that the IPWG was heading in the wrong direction). There are areas that need to be strengthened and the IPWG will look forward to re-engaging with the Co-Chairs in the near future, at least a couple of times prior to next Plenary. This presentation represents a snapshot in time, and the IPWG realizes that they will have more opportunities to refine the document as time progresses.

EC: Added that the EC will become a co-chair of the Belmont Forum, so this will help GEO stay engaged and better integrated with the Belmont Forum.

The Chair added that if the IPWG feels the framework is too confining, then, the Executive Committee would appreciate the group making it clear why they feel like this and why they would make a proposal to deviate from the guidance. The framework should be flexible enough to allow interesting points to be raised, while also ensuring that the IPWG be transparent about the positions taken.

Revised Terms of Reference (Document 6)

Danielle Lacasse: presented a proposal to revise the Terms of Reference of the IPWG. The proposal was to add item 4 "Approach". This is in the interest of transparency to better outline what was expected of the group. Additionally the group proposed to explicitly detail the two-phases of the IPWG process.

Chair: The revised Terms of Reference are accepted by the Executive Committee.

5 PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT BETWEEN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND SECRETARIAT (DOCUMENT 10)

EC: Speaking as co-author of the document - the aim of the document was to discuss how we guide our work as the Executive Committee vis-à-vis the Secretariat. The Rules of Procedure are fairly detailed and strict but are not well enough defined to allow the Secretariat to work in a flexible way. We need to think about adapting the governance for the transition phase. The question is: should we be putting more secretarial functions on the Secretariat? Or should we increase our expectations and the scope of activities? For example, is there a need to ensure the Secretariat can operate more independently? In this case, we need to consider expanding the oversight role. Should we consider ourselves more like a Board of Directors of a company - and while not micromanaging, be aware of the framework in which we are operating? As an Executive Committee, we provide a sufficient framework to allow the Secretariat to operate more independently. We should consider how to reconcile these two approaches as we go into the next decade in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness and minimize any unnecessary conflicts.

US: Speaking as the second co-author of the document - in looking back at the Rules of Procedure, the duties appear to be quite administrative and secretarial, not necessarily what would be expected of an operational staff. The US had always maintained a rather expansive view of the Secretariat model. This view had driven all of the secondments of talent from the United States, because it was to be a hub of significant intellectual and program formulation work that substantively helps to advance the work of GEO. Even in the most conservative view of the next decade, the US still sees a Secretariat that must have some genuine heft and capacity in a few key areas – areas that particularly underpin the mission and vision of GEO and areas in which representatives of Member governments and participating organizations, through volunteering their time, are simply unable to put in the amount of time needed to really move the ball forward. We have very experienced staff that are capable of operating more independently. Given the differences of opinion, however, we should have this discussion. Do the Rules of Procedure conform to the topics we are discussing today? Do the Rules of Procedure need to be clearer in providing direction to the Secretariat? This issue is exemplified by the current discussion of the Director's position. There has been no performance evaluation. Where are the current Rules of Procedure inconsistent with our expectations? The US believes the Rules of Procedure should be revisited.

Australia: Supports the widening of the scope of the Secretariat, to make better utilization of the staff of the Secretariat. There is also a need to specify oversight and performance criteria. Australia further supports the proposed review and revision of the Rules of Procedure to enhance the effectiveness of the Secretariat. Given the global context and emerging challenges, Australia supports discussion options for initiating a review.

Japan: Supports the position of Australia. In consideration of a renewed vision for the next 10 years, which is going to accelerate engagement with other communities, we would like to see the Secretariat have a more active role in this respect. We would like to propose a more autonomous, active role for the Secretariat for the coming GEOSS as it evolves for the future.

EC: Believes that the IPWG should look at this question in connection with the evolution of governance, if any. This should be well prepared, not something that can be decided on the spot. Connected with new governance is a combination of issues. In the future, if we move to a more active Secretariat, this requires a new framework, to be in place in 2016.

Korea: Supports the work of the Secretariat and the Director and would like to see that they continue to execute their duties within the current Rules of Procedure. There is a need to have an evaluation of the performance from the Secretariat before taking decisions.

Estonia: Prefers to see the outcomes of the IPWG process and the influence this may have on the role of the Secretariat. There are already conflicts in the work of the Secretariat staff, such as, supporting

technical initiatives and performing administrative support functions - organizing meetings and writing reports.

Japan: Feels that governance is an important issue. It will become necessary for the Secretariat to play an active role, but the governance structure needs further discussion, as well. Japan believes it is the Executive Committee's role to define governance, and not the IPWG. The IPWG may influence the perspective and discuss governance structures, but the realization of the IPWG's proposals should be made by the Executive Committee.

Italy: Reminded the Executive Committee that rules are rules until they are legally changed, country by country. Thus, the Executive Committee cannot take any decisions here; the political body in GEO is Plenary which has the power to change the rules. Italy does not see any reason why the IPWG cannot think about governance, since it was also raised by the Post-2015 Working Group. Also, we have not heard anything about accountability at this point. A no micro-management approach can be accepted if the management is done correctly. If there is any doubt, then it is our duty to go deeper since we are managing the money of our taxpayers.

EC: The European Commission sits on different governing boards. The fact that the Executive Committee meets 3-4 times a year means we need to have internal reflection as a committee, not only when we meet. What we decide will have repercussions on our role, since whatever we decide will fall back on us. We cannot meet more frequently, as this is not realistic. If we want to go to an expanded role for the Secretariat, this, too, will have implications for relations between the Secretariat and the Executive Committee. In looking at the agenda, we are currently dealing mostly with technical, and not political or strategic, issues. This would require that we expect more strategic and quality work to be presented to us from the Secretariat, but we also need to agree among ourselves how we would like to see the Executive Committee function. If we had a CEO, we would expect the agenda to have a more strategic focus. This needs to be discussed in the context of the outcome of the IPWG process and among the Executive Committee. The objective of this session was to stimulate debate and think about the future. For the next time, we need to have a chance to discuss what the Executive Committee would like to see for the future, and be able to reach some sort of an agreement on guidance for what we expect of the Secretariat.

Gabon: Wishes to avoid endless discussions that have been observed in other global endeavors. Gabon believes that the future of the planet will depend on how well we integrate Earth observations into our lives. GEO must be in the service of the Member States. This is very important as we have to work in a way that supports the Members. Gabon believes that we need to revise the Rules of Procedure, to adapt what we need in terms of a robust organization that can adapt to our objectives. We should avoid having a strong bureaucracy, which is the case in many other organizations. We need transparency and efficiency in the type of organization we wish to get. It is important to have a balance, however, to achieve our objectives. In view of the fact that we have to assess the Secretariat performance regarding its function and duties, we would like to get the Secretariat's point of view. This will provide more elements for analysis, if we want to reform the system. What are the opportunities the Secretariat would like to see? This will help prepare something more robust. Again, we have to find a good balance in what we do, and avoid burdensome bureaucracies.

Chair: Thanked Gabon for recalling that we are a voluntary organization. It is right to stress there is a balance, we cannot have both worlds. Once an administration is in place, it will never go away. In conclusion, we need to consider how we define ourselves with regard to the Executive Committee, and to come back next time (or later, depending on IPWG input), with more specific ideas.

Russia: Fully agree that there are problems to be solved to improve the Secretariat structure and that it is necessary to define what the Executive Committee would like to implement. Russia fully supports this idea and suggests that a procedure on how to proceed be created. They suggest that an assessment of current duties should be prepared, followed by a request for new ideas with proposed changes. It is

also agreed that the discussions start today, but we do not need all the materials to be put forward at this point in time.

US: Echoed the suggestion that a helpful piece of information would be to hear from the Secretariat as to what they view as the current restrictions and opportunities. US also agreed with the EC to come better prepared to the next meeting. It would be helpful, in the meantime, to formulate 3-4 questions for reflection that would help frame the discussion next time we meet. Questions such as: the degree or areas of oversight, versus more operational flexibility. This would help narrow down areas to talk about. This is the kind of discussion we should make time to have. US further suggested that the Secretariat should propose to streamline the agenda to primarily decision points. These are important discussions to provide a foundation for the next decade, and should be discussed fully.

Chair: Concluded that there was a need to incorporate both the viewpoint of the Secretariat and the IPWG, and asked Members of the Executive Committee to submit thoughts on a set of questions.

Action 31.9: The Executive Committee Members, as well as the Secretariat, will answer a set of questions regarding principles of governance and oversight by 5 September 2014 to inform the discussion document (Secretariat suggests these questions are developed by the Co-chairs). Questions and responses will also be shared with the IPWG with a request that the IPWG ultimately include Secretariat roles and responsibilities in its initial definition of the overall GEO governance structure. The preliminary outcome of these processes will be included for discussion during the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

6 SELECTION OF THE GEO SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR

This item was taken up in several closed sessions resulting in the decision to reappoint, without competition, the incumbent for another term. Italy abstained from this decision. See appendix for additional detail

Wednesday, 9 July 2014

7 GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Target and Task Progress (Document 11)

Alexia Massacand, GEO Secretariat, presented this document, which is a preview of the Target and Task Progress Report to be presented at the GEO-XI Plenary. The Task Assessment part of the Report draws from a number of sources including the recent 2014 GEO Work Plan Symposium (28-30 April, Geneva). The latter was an opportunity for participants to reiterate the need for GEOSS to provide governments with robust, updated and easy-to-grasp information.

Ms Massacand highlighted the fact that the Water Target is now green. The Community of Practice has addressed a number of issues, a number of projects have been funded by the EC, and the GEOSS Water Strategy specifically addressed outcomes from the Water Target – all contributing to the improved results. Major links have also been built with Health, Energy, Biodiversity (Wetlands), and with development of data to support the Water Sustainable Development Goal.

One unresolved and key issue is a strong call for reinforcing *in-situ* networks.

Discussion:

Italy: Questioned how the format of the Work Plan Symposium (WPS) has changed over the years.

Ms. Massacand responded that the first Work Plan Symposium was held in 2010 in South Africa with great success. Each Symposium is different as it addresses different issues. Hence, the format naturally evolves, also taking on board comments from the community in response to each Work Plan Symposium and adjusting as required.

7.2 Implementation Boards Report (Document 12)

Alessandro Annoni, co-chair of the IIB, presented this document. He stressed that GEOSS is not in a fully operational phase yet, and should not be confused with GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) operations. We have a functioning Discovery and Access Broker (DAB) which makes data discoverable; but individual nodes from providers may not be available.

The Secretariat Director re-enforced the remark that the GCI is still not operational – two of the major components the Portal and the DAB are funded through short-term research projects. We have, therefore, asked ESA and CNR what the annual operating costs would be to incorporate these numbers into the annual budget.

SA: Firstly, if we look at evaluations that have been done in our construct of GEO, who is responsible for handling interfaces that policy makers are interested in? Secondly - land use changes - who is thinking and designing interfaces about these with policy makers? There is a need for this to be thought through at the highest level; the Boards should be able to formulate responses to these issues so that discussions take place. And thirdly, we have a different understanding of what constitutes GEOSS - a network of networks? Do we have an idea of what end-users need in order to design GEOSS? If so, who is thinking about this? What kind of GEOSS do we want? Is this a further topic for IPWG?

EC: Agreed this is an issue for the IPWG.

Japan: Thanked Mr Annoni on behalf of all the Boards for their work. Japan supports the reorganization of Boards into one single board and proposes to formalize the structure of Boards to include a mechanism to follow up whether Tasks are achieved. Japan also appreciates the importance

of the engagement with the SDGs and UN bodies. Japan proposed at this meeting the importance of engaging with international bodies. This should be included in the Secretariat's proposed Engagement Strategy.

EC: Thanked Mr Annoni for the presentation which provided serious points for consideration. There appeared to be a lack of effective communication among the Boards, and a frustration from a lack of clear use of the Boards. This is a typical problem when creating governance processes when the design is not updated and fine-tuned. The IPWG should think about this in overall planning. There is a request that the Secretariat takes appropriate measures to closely follow-up the Board's recommendations and ensures cross-communication.

Italy: Questioned whether we really have leaders able to make accurate assessments? How much support are they getting from the Secretariat? Is it not time to define a hierarchy of activities, in terms of quality and effective timing, promoting some and diminishing others?

Mr Annoni:

A. Annoni: Implementing a mechanism to respond across disciplines should be part of future duties of the advisory board. Capacity Building is common to all activities and the board should also have the authority to link with. The Board should focus on defined targets and should have a comprehensive pool of skills of very senior persons for each of the domains and geographical areas we wish to target. Otherwise, we are not facing reality.

There is a need to start thinking now about reformulating the goals and objectives of the Board which do not want to spend precious time colouring graphs. We need to use the most appropriate (Board, Committees, Working Groups, Task Forces,...) into something really used by GEO. The Board should have the power to really focus on priorities and do something essential for the process. Implementation should be really monitored; e.g. Japan came with a very nice tool that showed how various Tasks are interlinked and we need clear commitment from Members to deliver. Today several leaders are still not really contributing but the voluntary nature of GEO should not be confused with lack of commitment to deliver what offered. The Secretariat support has been sufficient for now, but perhaps there is a need to evolve, depending on expanded responsibilities.

Italy: recalled that this problem was already raised by the Secretariat in Stresa. How do you suggest that we reach these solutions?

The Secretariat Director suggested that there is a design flaw in the current system and that the structures do not match the tasks and/or functions at hand. The evolution from the Committees (Capacity Building, User Engagement, Infrastructure, and Science and Technology) to the Boards assumed a cookie-cutter approach for each of the functions. We need to go back to what is the primary function of each Board – i.e., building an operational GCI - and design the best organizational structure to get there.

Chair: Thanked Mr Annoni for the presentation and debate, and requested him to present from his perspective a to-do list, to instruct and use as a tool in the IPWG process where we can assess to what extent the situation can be improved.

Mr Annoni: Proposed to do this in collaboration with the other Implementation Board co-chairs. For example, Capacity Building is now embedded in each of the Tasks, and this should be seen rather as one central Task in the Work Plan. Also, there is a need to consider that the first 10 years was spent building GEOSS; now we are moving to the next step of providing something that is useable. A possible approach is to have three boards/committees - one dealing with operations, one dealing with policy questions and another one dealing with Capacity Building to help promote GEO and develop membership.

Chair: There is an appreciation of this kind of analysis and we believe that you are the appropriate person to help with this.

Action 31.10: Alessandro Annoni to prepare on behalf of all Implementation Boards a “to-do” list to improve the operating state of the Boards by 15 August 2014. The assessment and input on the Board’s operating mechanisms and structures to be provided to the IPWG.

7.3 Update from Data Sharing Working Group

Draft White Paper: Mechanisms to Share Data (Document 13)

GEOSS Data Sharing Principles Post-2015 (Document 14)

Catherine Doldirina of the DSWG presented these documents. The first document provided practical approaches to increase data sharing as part of the GEOSS Data-CORE. The second document presented recommendations for strengthening the data sharing principles for the Post-2015 era – of particular note was the assertion that sharing data as part of GEOSS Data-CORE should be the default standard, rather than the exception.

Discussion:

Japan: Expressed their appreciation for the work on utilizing Data-CORE for the public. They were, however, very much concerned about progress on the study of Data Principles per country and requested the timetable for this study for the coming years.

Ms Doldirina explained that the plan is to conceptually rethink the emphasis on data sharing due to the voluntary nature of GEO. However, one would hope that the community adopts Data-CORE as the default condition for data sharing. This is a regime that will bring the highest level of legal interoperability and should be promoted nationally.

The Secretariat Director noted that the Belmont Forum is using some of the DSWG information to inform its discussions.

Australia: Expressed their appreciation for the work that has been completed. Australia agrees on elevating Data-CORE as the default condition. In terms of Data Management Principles, Australia appreciates contact with Bureau of Meteorology and notes that many of the issues raised in the paper resonate strongly with Australia’s policies and practices.

Chair: Thanked the group for its work, and requested that it be provided to the IPWG for inclusion in its deliberations.

7.4 Report from Data Management Principles Task Force (Document 15)

Alessandro Annoni presented this document.

Discussion:

EC: Thanked Mr. Annoni for the presentation. The EC proposed that the Executive Committee be invited to propose its answers to the questions posed in the presentation directly to Mr. Annoni with a copy to the Executive Committee and the Secretariat. We would like to see a synthesis in view of the proposal offered by Mr. Annoni and how it should be modified. We should start discussions with constituencies now in order to gauge the range of responses. The EC further proposed to come back to the next Executive Committee with the follow-up, including a text that is stable and can be used as a basis for discussion with constituencies prior to the next Ministerial.

Japan: Suggested that this be discussed with those outside the GEO community and consensus on the proposed DMP be developed before the next Ministerial so the Principles will be practicable and actionable.

Mr. Annoni requested clarification that DMP will no longer be put before GEO-XI for adoption.

US: Stated that there is a need to synchronize the DSWG and DMP and present for information at Plenary.

EC: Suggested that the Secretariat should transfer these messages to IPWG.

Action 31.11: The Executive Committee to provide feedback on the Data Management Policy questions by 31 August 2014 directly to Alessandro Annoni, co-chair of the Data Management Principles Task Force (DMPTF), with a copy to all Executive Committee members and the Secretariat.

Action 31.12: The Secretariat to ensure that matters in Agenda Items 2, 5 and 7 pertaining to Engagement Strategy, Governance and Oversight (Secretariat and Boards), Data Sharing and Data Management, should be coordinated with the Implementation Working Group (IPWG) and should be discussed by the Executive Committee and GEO-XI and GEO-XII Plenary, but any decisions should be finalized only at the end of 2015, as part of the next 10-Year Implementation Plan (2016-2025).

7.5 Renewal of Implementation Board Membership (Document 16)

Alexia Massacand, GEO Secretariat presented this document.

Chair: The recommendations were accepted by the Executive Committee.

8 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

8.1 Presentation on 5th Evaluation Report - Climate, Weather and Water (Document 17)

Lars Ingolf Eide presented this document.

Discussion:

Chair: Thanked the Evaluation team for the report.

The Secretariat Director publically acknowledged Mr Eide's substantial efforts. He has dedicated much of his free time to numerous GEO evaluations. In the second Call for Secondments, we requested assistance in this area, recognizing the material weaknesses in voluntary M&E efforts. Short of a secondment, a policy decision to incorporate this functionality into the Secretariat could be considered.

SA: Would like to see the set of recommendations that keep re-occurring.

Mr Eide: Indicated that this is on the agenda of the 6th and Final Evaluation team – it will be done by someone who has not been on an M&E team before. We will also be re-evaluating the entire process for the final evaluation, to see if something can be done differently.

8.2 Preparations for Final Evaluation (Oral presentation)

John Adamec made this presentation remotely.

Mr Adamec explained that more people are needed to complete the report; only one-half of those who responded are participating in the Final Evaluation.

Chair: Proposed that we provide the names of candidates to the Secretariat by September.

Action 31.13: The Executive Committee to provide the Secretariat additional candidates to support the final Monitoring and Evaluation by 31 August 2014.

8.3 Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations (Oral presentation)

Mr Adamec informed the Executive Committee on the process for updating the document "Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS evaluations" for submittal to GEO-XI Plenary.

9 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

9.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 18)

The Executive Committee considered the Secretariat Operations report. It requested that Special Services Agreements be included in future reports. Mission exact dates must also be indicated.

Action 31.14: The Secretariat to include in Annex of the Secretariat Operations Report all Special Services Agreements in use.

9.2 2013 Financial Statements and Report of the External Auditor (Document 19)

The Executive Committee noted the 2013 Financial Statements and the clean (unqualified) Audit Opinion from the Swiss National Auditors.

The overall financial status is sound. The Total assets have increased by CHF 0.4 m from CHF 2.9 m at 31 Dec 2012 (which included cash of CHF 2.6 m) to CHF 3.3 m (including cash of CHF 3.1 m). The total liabilities have decreased by CHF 0.3 m from CHF 0.9 m at 31 Dec 2012 to CHF 0.6 m (these liabilities are primarily for long-term employee benefits). As a result of the above changes in total assets and total liabilities, GEO Secretariat's net assets increased by CHF 0.7 m during 2013, from CHF 2.0 m at 31 Dec 2012 to CHF 2.7 m. This represents the cash requirement for 10 months of operations. There was a surplus of CHF 0.4 m in 2013, compared to a deficit of CHF 0.2 m in 2012. (However, the 2.0 m carry over was maintained). The revenue of CHF 4.7 m in 2013 had increased from CHF 4.5 m in 2012.

The 2013 expenditure reached CHF 4.3 m, compared to CHF 4.8 m in 2012. The expenditure was well within budget of CHF 5.9 m.

As in previous years, it is difficult to align expenditures with actual income because of unpredictable timing and amount of contributions. The Audit concluded it would be helpful if this could be rectified.

Action 31.15: The Secretariat to provide the Executive Committee a report on the status of the implementation of Audit Recommendations at the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

Didier Monnot of the Swiss Federal Audit Office presented the 2013 Financial Audit, and was accompanied by Angiolo Rolli (WMO).

Mr. Rolli: Expressed his appreciation to the Swiss auditors for the professional and comprehensive audit of GEO finances.

Mr. Monnot: Stated that the Swiss Federal Audit Office is recognized as member of the Panel of External Auditors for the UN, leading several groups on IPSAS.

Discussion:

SA: Requested clarification on how employee benefits are treated and if there was a risk due to the accumulation of Annual leave.

Mr Rolli: Explained that GEO Staff are administered under the same staff rules as WMO Staff members and that there is a limitation on the number of leave days that can be accumulated.

EC: Stated that the GEO Trust Fund is made from pledges by member governments. The European Commission is requested to provide assurances on monies made as contributions to trust funds. The Commission has an internal audit system and indicated that the UN has a FAFA agreement – can you further explain this system, what is the verification system?

Mr Monnot: Within the UN, there is one principle in auditing – that of a single-audit, which means that the institution that audits financial statements is the only external auditor of the institution. If a Member state would like to have more information or details requiring an additional audit, they may not ask for an audit from their own country. FAFA is an agreement between the European Union

(represented by the European Commission) and the United Nations that allows the European Commission to audit several parts of a UN institution to which it has made a financial contribution. This is a big issue within the panel of UN external auditors. Normally, the official external auditor has to be informed if the EU requests this. It is important to note that the Audit of Financial Statements and an audit of performance are not the same. The Swiss Auditors apply a standard of international auditing, done evenly across IPSAS, thus guaranteeing consistency and fairness. Performance audits focus on specific points or elements of an institution's operations.

EC: Sought clarification on whether or not the auditors inquire about the reason for a given expenditure, or do they only look to see if the expenditure is reported correctly?

Mr Monnot: The Auditors check that the internal control system gives a reasonable assurance that financial processes are sound, and that accounting is sound. The audit opinion means just this. It is not under the purview of the Auditor to judge where the expenses are made.

Italy: Requested how audits are made on personal consultancies. Is there a check on every single SSA that is concluded, or just a general overview? Is there a check to see that WMO rules are being followed?

Mr Monnot: The international standards provide for checking each position in a financial statement, which means that we have to check that the numbers are correct. We also go further, into internal control systems, to check processes and whether they are correctly applied.

Italy: Requested if the Auditor is checking contract by contract.

Mr Monnot: We have staff that checks each contract.

Mr Rolli: As part of the WMO Administration we review all contracts, and all Special Services Agreements are issued by WMO Human Resources.

Italy: It appears that one year ago some people working for a company, apparently worked under an SSA. We were informed by the Director that the contract was not made with a company but under two individual SSAs – is this a normal rule?

Mr Rolli: Employment of individual contractors leads to Special Services Agreements. If these are not individuals, then this should be a procurement.

EC: Requests information on the recommendations (in the audit report) on specific voluntary contributions, which highlight that there is a certain risk due to the lack of documentation for associated activities. Is there a potential financial problem that we do not know what is left in the fund or what might be reimbursed to donor countries for the exercise of a specific task? This is in reference to recommendations: 27, 28, and 29.

Secretariat Director: explained that voluntary contributions within the GEO construct are viewed as “untethered” – all money that comes into the GEO Trust Fund is treated like a regular contribution according to WMO rules.

Mr Monnot: confirmed that there is a certain risk with regard to voluntary contributions.

EC: Within the Budget Working Group it has been stated that the category of 'SSA' is assigned for specific services, and can also be used for staff resources who may work in the Secretariat to provide specific tasks, accounted for in a number of days, not more than 9 months per year. This kind of SSA can also be used for consultancies that are delivered externally.

Mr Monnot: Explained that SSAs are used for engaging individual contractors for a limited time who either provide consultative support, or who replace staff.

EC: Queried regarding staff categories, - why not hire more fixed-term staff? We were informed that they can be hired for a designated time, but at the end of three years, it becomes difficult to not renew contracts.

Mr Rolli: Answered that if there is a need for a long-term position, then there is a need to use a different type of contract; SSAs are not the right instrument in this case.

Patricia Geddes: Clarified that after a period of a fixed-term contract, if the duties are still there, it would be difficult to not renew said contract and hire another person to do the job (or a very similar job). WMO is not subject to term-limit rules which have been adopted in only a very few UN organisations. On the other hand, if the duties are no longer required and/or the position is no longer funded, then a contract can be terminated.

SA: Is there a process for handling the audit recommendations? The Secretariat is requested to report on the status of the recommendations at the next Executive Committee.

Secretariat Director: Explained that all recommendations have been accepted by the WMO Secretary General, and that this acceptance means that, if applicable, they will be incorporated into the day to day operations of the GEO Secretariat.

US: It looks as though there is a mix of recommendations – some that can only be handled by WMO, which may have an impact on GEO, and some that GEO can handle on its own. We need some clarification on what WMO takes responsibility for and the impact on GEO if any.

Chair: The Executive Committee requests that the Secretariat actively engages with WMO to report on proper follow-up to the audit recommendations.

Action 31.15: The Secretariat to provide the Executive Committee a report on the status of the implementation of Audit Recommendations at the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

9.3 Report of the 2014 Budget Working Group and adoption of the budgetary annexes (Document 20)

Andrea Tilche, member of the Budget Working Group presented this document in three parts – an introduction and cover note, comments on the Secretariat Operations Budget for 2014 and a revised Terms of Reference for the Working Group. The Executive Committee was requested to adopt the budgetary annexes and provide guidance on the use of SSAs, Secretariat travel, support to developing countries and budget line flexibility.

David Reidmiller, member of the Budget Working Group, noted that the indicative budget for two years out is in line with the Rules of Procedure and has been included in the document.

Discussion:

Italy: On the request for budget line flexibility, a revised budget may be presented and discussed during the next session of the Executive Committee.

EC: Agrees that budget overruns for whatever reason may lead to making cuts somewhere else, after six months –propose a revision on basis of claims and expectations

AT: But if a category overrun occurs consistently, it may be difficult to change the budget.

Chair: BWG should come up with options which are common practice.

Gabon: Notes that the travel budget escalating and asks that justification should be provided. With regard to developing country participation, attendance of meetings should be for good reason. We want to know that real projects are supported. Do we receive reports from people benefiting from this funding to attend meetings?

Chair: Noting the Executive Committee's agreement that the budget structure developed by the BWG should be adopted, the Chair concludes that the future Budgets should be presented on the basis of this template. The 2014 figures could be accepted but, based on the proposals of the Budget Working Group, the structure may need adaptation and a proposal would be made for the 2015 budget. There is acceptance by the Executive Committee of the proposal to renegotiate the 7% overhead currently

applied to in-kind resources by WMO, and that the WG will propose criteria and guidelines on Travel, SSAs and budget line flexibility. There should be clarification of the terminology used. The question of rising ITC costs should be considered.

The EC, noting that it was now satisfied that there was budgetary transparency compatible with international standards stated that it could now announce its pledge to the GEO Trust Fund for 2014 will be € 800,000. A residual amount of a further € 200,000 available to the EC may be donated to the Working Capital Fund or for a ring-fenced purpose. The decision on this would be taken once the whole budget process has been finalised.

Action 31.16: The Executive Committee to send a letter in advance of Plenary to GEO Members requesting identification of pledges for contributions to the GEO Trust Fund for the forthcoming year(s) at Plenary and/or in writing to the Secretariat in advance of the Plenary. Proposal: Letter to be sent on 1 October 2014 in conjunction with submission of documents for GEO-XI Plenary.

Action 31.17: The Budget Working Group to develop a proposal for the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee on options, conditions and/or criteria for the:

- Use of Special Services Agreements (SSAs), including consideration on thresholds;
- Secretariat travel budget;
- Budget line flexibility;
- Support to developing countries; and
- Revision of Budget Working Group Terms of Reference based on new assignments.

Action 31.18: The Secretariat to continue discussions with the World Meteorological Organization to renegotiate the 7% overhead on in-kind contributions and the increasing costs for ICT support.

9.4 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure (Document 21)

The Secretariat Director highlighted that the best practice of providing the Executive Committee with a revised prediction of year-end income and expenditure has again been met in this document. As can be seen in the document, there is a current deficit and some pledges have yet to be made known to the Secretariat.

SA: Would it be unreasonable to ask countries to indicate when they think they will deliver the pledge?

Chair: Agreed that it would be fair to request clarification on the expected date of pledges.

US: Will release their pledge by the end of September.

Japan: Has just made their contribution.

Chair: Asked for a revised document reflecting new revenues.

Action 31.19: The Secretariat to reissue Document 21 - Interim Report on Income and Expenditure, by 31 July 2014 reflecting the current status of pledges and income.

9.5 Rules of Procedure Updates (Document 22)

- Establishment of Working Groups;
- Participating Organizations, Observers Categories.

The Secretariat Director presented a proposed update to the Rules of Procedure to be presented at the GEO-XI Plenary. The recently established GEOSS Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) and Budget Working Group have been included in Annex B. Greater detail on the differences between Participating Organization and Observer status has been added to Annex C, together with a separate

application for each category. Additionally an explanatory table providing an overview of each category of GEO constituents and their entitlements has been provided in Annex C.

9.6 Preliminary analysis of contributions of Participating Organizations and Members for Strategic Review (Document 23)

Alexia Massacand, GEO Secretariat presented this document which gave an overview of the contributions by GEO Members and Participating Organisations to the Work Plan. The analysis had been undertaken at the request of ExCom 29. The preliminary analysis was noted by the Executive Committee who acknowledged that the criteria for acceptance as a PO should be broadened to include contributions to GEOSS implementation not currently captured as Work Plan components.

9.7 Evaluation of applications of new Participating Organizations (Document 24 – for consultation)

The Secretariat Director presented this document. Of the eight applications received, the Secretariat recommended seven be processed for further consideration, and that additional information be requested for one of the applications.

Discussion:

The EC made a comment here expressing its concern about the increasing numbers of Participating Organizations.

Gabon: Raised concerns on the proposal to recommend to Plenary to accept two applications from organizations in Africa and requested that further information be provided on those organizations so that it can be considered in advance of the next meeting.

Italy: Raised concern about the many requests to become Participating Organizations and proposed that a moratorium be imposed during this transition period.

US: Agreed that there is an impact on the Organisation of meetings such as the Plenary, but was concerned that a moratorium may negatively impact GEO, should highly desirable organisations be not accepted and requested to re-apply.

Action 31.20: The Secretariat to provide additional information to Gabon for the two Participating Organization applicants from Africa by 31 July 2014. Gabon will provide the Secretariat with its recommendation (Proposal: Gabon response to Secretariat by 5 September 2014).

Action 31.21: The Secretariat to provide to Executive Committee recommendations for improved criteria and supporting documentation from PO applicants for the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

USA proposed that in the interest of using the time of the Executive Committee meeting more effectively, some of the more routine documents of the session be presented for information only with no presentation and/or discussion unless deemed essential.

Action 31.22: The Secretariat to propose restructuring of document presentation for Executive Committee meetings by 5 September 2014, for example:

- Documents presented «For discussion / Not for discussion», acknowledging that any Executive Committee Member may request that a «Not for discussion» document could be moved to the «For discussion» category.

APPENDIX

Report from the Closed Session of 31st session of the Executive Committee (prepared by the Co-Chairs).

Following a presentation by GEO Secretariat Director of a self-assessment on her accomplishments to date, the Executive Committee discussed aspects of the presentation with the GEO Secretariat Director for a total of 90 minutes.

The Executive Committee then debated the reappointment of the GEO Secretariat Director 'in camera' and reached a consensus (with one abstention) to renew the contract of Ms Barbara Ryan for another three-year term (until 30 June 2018).

The Executive Committee also decided that if a future 'GEO Retirement age' was introduced, this would then have to be applied retroactively. In subsequent contact with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) however, it was clarified that a separate GEO retirement age policy could not be established as GEO Secretariat staff are employees of WMO and WMO retirement age policy applies to the GEO Secretariat staff.

The Co-Chairs agreed that should WMO extend the retirement age of 65 to all current UN employees, Barbara Ryan will be subject to this retirement age and will retire at age 65 following completion of a further full two year term (on 30 June 2017).

The Executive Committee agreed to return to the subject of Ethics and possible thresholds for decision making on awarding of outside contracts (Special Services' Agreements).

Recognising the link between the ethical concerns and financial interests, the Executive Committee decided it would be appropriate for the Budget Working Group to give its opinion and advise Executive Committee on the suitability of existing regulations. It was agreed not to create a new Working Group for this but to extend the Terms of Reference of the Budget Working Group to be modified accordingly.

Executive Committee also recognized that the absence of a tool for assessing the Director's performance had presented challenges, and agreed to develop a tool for a 360° appraisal of the GEO Secretariat Director that will include key performance indicators.

31st GEO Executive Committee

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Presentation of the 2013 Financial Statement and Report of the External Auditor	
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Presentation of the Data Management Principles Task Force Report and the Infrastructure Implementation Board (IBB) Report	
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Presentation of the Data Sharing Group Documents	
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<p>Presentation of the 5th GEOSS Evaluation Report</p>	
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<p>Presentation of the Societal Benefits Implementation Board (SBIB)</p>	
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