

Report
39th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 9-10 March 2017
(As accepted at the 40th Executive Committee Meeting)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chair: Robert-Jan Smits, European Commission (EC)

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

- The 39th Executive Committee Meeting agenda was approved, noting the addition of a presentation by Japan under agenda point 7.2.
- The 38th Executive Committee Meeting report was approved as submitted.
- The Executive Committee approved the closing/carrying over actions as indicated.

2 LEAD CO-CHAIR REPORT AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair highlighted seven priorities for the Executive Committee in 2017, which included:

1. Clarifying roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee, Programme Board (PB) and GEO Secretariat;
2. Implementation of the GEO Engagement Strategy;
3. Follow-up of the Commercial Sector Engagement;
4. Strategic assessment of GEO Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
5. Liaising with the GEO Programme Board;
6. Further consideration of a user-centred approach; and
7. Recruitment of the next GEO Secretariat Director.

The Committee supported the Lead Co-Chair priorities, with the addition of identification of a Lead Co-Chair for 2018.

3 STRATEGIC OUTLOOK 2017 AND BEYOND

3.1 Report from the Working Group on Roles and Responsibilities

- The Executive Committee recognized the efforts of the Working Group (WG) and supported the roles and responsibilities articulated in the report.
- The 39th Executive Committee meeting report to include the proviso that: 1) the objective of the WG was to clarify roles among the Executive Committee, the Programme Board and the Secretariat only; and 2) the document does not change or replace GEO Rules of Procedure.

- There was agreement on two Executive Committee meetings per year, starting in 2018; timing and co-location of future meetings to be further examined by the WG, with a proposal ready for the 40th Executive Committee meeting.

3.2 Executive Committee 2017 Programme of Work

- The Executive Committee 2017 Programme of Work was adopted.

3.3 Secretariat 2017 Programme of Work

- The Executive Committee noted the Secretariat 2017 Programme of Work, in particular:
 - The need to cast the Deliverables from the planned activities in terms of specific expected and intended outcomes as opposed to the current practice of planned attendance of meetings, support and coordination functions.
 - The Societal Benefit Areas (SBAs) can be regarded as “shop windows” into Work Programme (WP);
 - The need for alignment of Programme Board and Secretariat activities with the agenda and priorities of the Executive Committee; and
 - The need to clarify and decide on appropriate definitions (e.g. deliverables and KPIs) and their articulation.

3.4 Review of the Key Performance Indicators from the GEO Strategic Plan Reference Document

- There was approval of the process as outlined in the document, noting the need for information to demonstrate the added-value of work being done, in order to justify and reinforce continued investments in GEO. In this regard, it was suggested to implement a process of monitoring progress of GEOSS Implementation in order to track movement and provide appropriate measures of performance.

Action 39.1: Roles and Responsibilities WG to provide proposal for timing of two Committee meetings per year, starting in 2018. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 39.2: Secretariat to reissue its Programme of Work, with particular attention to outcomes of the 39th Executive Committee meeting. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 39.3: Secretariat to coordinate revision of KPI implementation plan. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

4 REPORT FROM THE SELECTION PANEL FOR THE GEO SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR

The Executive Committee approved the Vacancy Notice, with minor adjustments, and the Recruitment Timeline. The Committee further noted that:

- A transition period is foreseen in the schedule to allow for a “seamless transition”.
- Members are asked to widely publicize the announcement.

Action 39.4: Selection Panel to modify Vacancy announcement. **Due: 13 March 2017.**

- Correct “Microsoft office applications” in announcement text.
- Include reference to Plenary under ‘Duties and Responsibilities’.

5 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE GEO SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR 2017

The Executive Committee completed the performance evaluation of the Secretariat Director in an in-camera Session on 9 March 2017. The Committee is fully satisfied with the performance of the Secretariat Director, and has full confidence in her successfully completing her current term through June 2018.

6 REPORT FROM THE PROGRAMME BOARD

The Executive Committee:

- Congratulated the new PB and co-chairs for work accomplished;
- Reiterated the importance of alignment of agendas and priorities among the Executive Committee, the PB and Secretariat;
- Emphasized the need to showcase selected examples of where Earth observations contributed to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and scaling up where possible; and
- Acknowledged the PB 2017 plan of work.

7 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

7.1 Report from the Commercial Sector (CS) Working Group:

The Executive Committee welcomed the report, but noted that further work is needed, including:

- Less emphasis on the “why and what”, more emphasis on the “who and how” (modus operandi);
- The creation of high-level CS group to interact with the Executive Committee, for input on how this engagement (co-production, co-design) is foreseen;
- Explore whether the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) PS network can be leveraged this platform; and
- Consideration of lessons learned with respect to Appathon(s) and AIP.

7.2 GEO Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan 2017-2019

The Executive Committee approved the proposed Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan 2017-2019 with additional input to inform the next iteration of the plan. Specifically, the Executive Committee called for:

- Examples of successful engagement processes to showcase at GEO-XIV;
- Identification of communication mechanisms to facilitate engagement;
- Consideration of an adaptation emphasis under Paris Agreement, and alignment with PB outcomes, in the next draft of the plan;
- Positioning GEO as unique provider of relevant data (e.g. geographic, demographic, socio-economic) for all priority areas (i.e. enhanced KPIs);
- Encouraging GEO Member collaboration to ensure attendance in the UN Interagency Expert Group (IEAG) High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), particularly for those countries submitting reports; and

- Future iterations of the Engagement plan should include an indication of the work-flow of activities.

7.3 Resources for GEO

The Lead Co-Chair:

- Urged Executive Committee Members to contribute and/or increase contributions to the GEO Trust Fund;
- Requested that, using strengthened language, «voluntary contributions» be carefully but stridently solicited from GEO Members and POs, given the demonstrated added-value of GEO; and
- Encouraged Members of the Executive Committee to strengthen in-country collaboration where investments are being made in similar endeavours, including but not limited to funding to other international information infrastructures.

Action 39.5: Secretariat to revise Commercial Sector report. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

- Strengthen ‘who’ and ‘how’, with a view towards creating an advisory committee to engage with the Executive Committee.

Action 39.6: Secretariat to explore leveraging UN-GGIM PS network. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 39.7: Secretariat to compile lessons learned with respect to commercial sector engagement with Appathon(s) and AIPs. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 39.8: Secretariat to revise Engagement Strategy, with particular attention to outcomes of the 39th Executive Committee meeting. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 39.9: Secretariat to work with key partners (e.g. UNFCCC, IPCC, CEOS, GCOS, ICOS) to design a Side Event at COP-23. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 39.10: Secretariat to propose specific resourcing actions for the Executive Committee, noting outcomes of the 39th Executive Committee meeting. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

8 REPORT OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP

- The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation to the Budget Working Group (BWG) for its work in 2016. The Committee reinforced the need for more GEO Members to contribute to the GEO Trust Fund.
- Interim report to be revised.
- Approved contributions had been CHF 7.2 million for 2016; CHF 4 million was received. The Secretariat was commended for ensuring expenditures matched contributions.

Action 39.11: BWG to revise report, noting outcomes of the 39th Executive Committee meeting. **Due: 24 March 2017.**

9 GEO LEGAL STATUS UPDATE

The Executive Committee noted new WMO-Swiss agreement that acknowledges GEO and expressed its appreciation to Switzerland, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Secretariat for the work on enhancing GEO’s legal status.

10 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

- The Executive Committee noted the report and expressed its appreciation for the continuing efforts of the Secretariat, particularly in streamlining activities related to the SDGs. The Executive Committee also acknowledged the Secretariat's careful stewardship of GEO's limited resources.
- Pending confirmation of Conservation International website compliance with One-China policy, the Executive Committee will adopt the Secretariat recommendations, and will approve applications for the following four Organizations:
 1. Earthmind;
 2. Conservation International (CI);
 3. Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN); and
 4. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
- 10.3 The Executive Committee approved the Summary Report of its deliberations in 2016, which is comprised of the Executive Summaries of the three Meetings held in 2016 -- March, July and November.

Action 39.13: Secretariat to confirm One-China policy with respect to Conservation International application; inform Lead Co-Chair so that approval of all PO applications can be announced. **Due: 24 March 2017.**

11 GEO-XIII REVIEW

The Executive Committee:

- Noted with appreciation the GEO-XIII Review and statistics;
- Suggested applying the lessons learned to all GEO meetings (e.g. the Work Programme Symposium); and
- Thanked again the Russian Federation hosts for their hospitality and efficient organization of GEO-XIII Plenary Week.

12 GEO-XIV PLANNING

- The Executive Committee issued guidance to focus the theme of GEO-XIV on Delivery/Deliverables ;
- The US Planning team welcomes additional participation; interested parties may contact Ms Yana Gevorgyan (USA) (Secretariat, EC and Japan to join); and
- With the need to identify Panel topics quickly, the US called on the GEO community to identify success stories and speakers; the Work Programme Symposium would be a good milestone.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Action 39.14: Secretariat to modify Rules of Procedure, Annex B, Article 2, removing the Executive Committee reference: "...and approve interim staff, including secondments." **Due: 41st Executive Committee meeting / GEO-XIV.**

14 SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

All action items were reviewed during the meeting to ensure consensus of the Executive Committee.

Report

39th Executive Committee Meeting

Geneva, Switzerland, 9-10 March 2017

FULL REPORT

Thursday 9 November 2017

Meeting convened at 09:00

Chair: Robert-Jan Smits, European Commission

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

1.1 Welcome from Lead Co-Chair and Co-Chairs

Mr Robert-Jan Smits, European Commission, Lead Co-Chair, welcomed fellow Co-Chairs and Executive Committee Members, especially those individuals attending for the first time. He also welcomed the GEO Secretariat Director and staff. He underlined his commitment to GEO on behalf of the EC and the European Caucus. He emphasised the clear progress made as Lead Co-Chair in collaboration with the Secretariat to improve working practices on behalf of the Executive Committee, to define clear priorities, and establish a good working relationship with the GEO Programme Board (PB) and the Secretariat. He underlined the support of the European Caucus for this arrangement expressed at its recent meeting.

Mr Jiahong LI on behalf of China Co-Chair Hejun YIN, expressed gratitude to the Lead Co-Chair for convening the 39th Executive Committee meeting. He remarked that the GEOSS Asia-Pacific Symposium was successfully held in January 2017, including the AOGEOSS Coordination Meeting, showing progress in terms of collaboration with GEO Members and Participating Organizations (POs) in the region. The first Chinese Carbon Dioxide Observation Satellite Mission, TanSat, was successfully launched in December 2016, and it is currently undergoing in-orbit testing to be fully operational. China is ready to conduct joint observations and research with GEO Member States, such as Japan GOSAT, the United States OCO2 and the European Union Sentinel 5 under the GEO framework and promote data sharing.

Mr Philemon Mjwara, South Africa Co-Chair, voiced excitement on the new GEO priority areas agreed on in St Petersburg at the Plenary, and the new strategic role that the Executive Committee will play with strong support from the Programme Board, the technical arm of GEO and the Secretariat. He expressed appreciation for preparations of the meeting and congratulations to the new Lead Co-Chair.

Mr Stephen Volz U.S. Co-Chair, thanked the Lead Co-Chair, his team and the Secretariat, and looked forward to a renewed focus on the strategic management of GEO through the three main bodies (the Executive Committee, the Programme Board and the Plenary), which have different responsibilities for a successful outcome. GEO has a renewed focus for productivity, past the birthing stage, for a return on investment, to deliver through collective coordination. The US looks forward to hosting the GEO-XIV Plenary, confirming speakers and presentations to focus on deliverables.

Ms Barbara Ryan, Secretariat Director, thanked the Lead Co-Chair for his leadership in working with the Secretariat and voiced encouragement to see so many Members were able to attend, with the exception of Uganda and Korea.

1.2 Welcome of New Members and Introductions

The Chair welcomed new Executive Committee Members UK and Uganda, and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), along with the returning Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) and the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), as Observers to the Executive Committee for the Participating Organizations on the PB.

Outcomes:

- New Members (UK, Uganda) and PO Observers (IEEE) welcomed.

1.3 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1) (for decision)

Outcome: Draft Agenda adopted (noting addition of presentation by Japan under agenda item 7.2).

1.4 Draft Report of the 38th Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2 – for decision)

Outcome: The Draft Report of the 38th Executive Committee Meeting (Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, 8 November 2016) was approved, with a comment to include an Executive Summary in future drafts.

1.5 Review of Actions from Previous Meetings (Document 3 – for decision)

All actions, save two, were completed, or were to be by the end of the Executive Committee Meeting. Action item 38.7 a request for membership on the Partnership Advisory Committee (PAC) for the Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS) will be done in time for the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Executive Council meeting, or the next GFCS Board meeting, whichever is most relevant. The last action was 38.8, Application for Observer Status of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The GEO Secretariat has discussed the issue with the UNFCCC Secretariat. Since GEO was recently granted status to exhibit at the Conference of Parties (COPs), the UNFCCC recommended GEO wait before resubmitting an application to become an official Observer. The Secretariat Director noted the need for substantial support from Member countries when the application is resubmitted.

Outcome: The Executive Committee approved the closing/carrying over of actions as presented in the document, as indicated.

1.6 Update on Secretariat Activities (Presentation – for information)

The previous Executive Committee meeting was held the day before GEO Plenary XIII so this meeting presented the first opportunity for feedback. It can be noted that people felt the Plenary was successful. It was the most well attended Plenary which was not co-located with a Ministerial Summit.

The first UN World Data Forum was held in Cape Town in January, with GEO speaking engagements throughout the week. Use of Earth observations for better data provision was a message that was well received at the event. GEO's South Africa Co-Chair Mjwara gave the keynote speech at the Conference Dinner with the South Africa Statistical Agency hosting the event.

The Secretariat reported a strong presence at the Geospatial World Forum, held in Hyderabad, India, in January. The GEO Principal for Mexico, Rolando Ocampo won an award for Ambassador of the Year, an award was given to the GEO Principal for Australia, Stuart Minchin, for Technological Advances citing the Data Cube, JRC received an award for the Global Human Settlement Layer (GHSL), and GEO's Secretariat Director, Barbara Ryan was named to the Geospatial Media Hall of Fame.

Progress has been made strengthening AfriGEOSS, and its relations with UNECA and United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). GEO was referenced in the Africa Action Plan, with a mandate calling for AfriGEOSS support to the Africa Space Policy. The GEOSS Asia-Pacific Symposium was held in Japan in January and appreciation was expressed to Japan for hosting the event. Cambodia became a GEO Member as a direct result of the meeting, with the Principal based in the Cambodia Statistical Agency, particularly relevant given GEO's work on the SDGs.

AOGEOSS worked on the Tokyo Statement, which had strong endorsement and focused on the SDGs. The GEO Secretariat presence helped with chairing and/or participating in individual Sessions and Side Events.

At the American Geophysical Union (AGU) in San Francisco in December, the Secretariat held a dedicated Town Hall as well as participating in other Town Halls and poster sessions. It was an opportunity to introduce the SDGs to a community that was generally not familiar with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In terms of GEO Programmatic developments for climate activities, GEO had a strong presence at an Earth Day Event at COP-22, with the Global Climate Observation System (GCOS), CEOS, the Integrated Carbon Observations System (ICOS) and GEO on a Panel in Morocco. An announcement was made on data sharing with Amazon web and cloud services, offering EUR 30,000 to the Italian National Council for Research (CNR), who host the GEOSS Discovery and Access Broker (DAB). In Food Security and Agriculture, the G20 re-mandated GEOGLAM, and Germany announced they will provide funding for the next GEOGLAM Programme Manager, and WMO Commission on Hydrology work is continuing. For Cold Regions, the Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) would like to propose an Arctic GEOSS linked to the GEO framework. For Disasters, the Secretariat held a GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) for Disasters session, a good model for capturing user-needs and what the community needs are for the GCI. The Secretariat provides guidance and support to partners on Application Programme Interfaces (APIs) developed at CNR for discovering and accessing data in the GCI.

GEO Secretariat work on space-based coordination has consisted of working in bilateral meetings with CEOS. In-situ coordination will remain a challenge for the next couple of years, as coordination is complicated. The Secretariat continues to carrying out advocacy for radio frequency coordination. This is a key issue and GEO's partnership with WMO is crucial. In communications, the GEO website is mobile friendly, social media metrics are increasing and Newsletter frequency and followers have increased. The Secretariat is working hard on the Work Programme Symposium in May in Pretoria with the International Symposium on Remote Sensing of the Environment (ISRSE), supported by abstracts and papers.

Outcome: The Executive Committee expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for its work.

2 LEAD CO-CHAIR REPORT AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS (ORAL REPORT – FOR INFORMATION)

The Chair presented the Executive Committee's priorities and expectations for 2017. He emphasized the close interaction with the Programme Board (PB), since the Board's role facilitates and supports the strategic role that the Executive Committee plays within the GEO governance structure. Experience to date had convinced him that having a single, Lead Co-Chair for the year, providing strengthened and continuous leadership support to the Secretariat, was a worthwhile investment of his time. The seven priorities for the year are:

1. Clarifying roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee, Programme Board and the Secretariat;
2. Implementation of the GEO Engagement Strategy;

3. Follow-up of the Commercial Sector Engagement;
4. Strategic assessment of GEO Key Performance Indicators;
5. Liaising with the GEO Programme Board;
6. Further consideration of a user-centred approach; and
7. Recruitment of the next GEO Secretariat Director.

The Chair also noted that an eighth priority would be to identify a Lead Committee Co-Chair for 2018.

The Chair commented that the biggest challenge would be to align these seven priorities with the work of the Programme Board and Secretariat. With respect to the Board, the Chair expressed his appreciation of the 5th Programme Board meeting and its vigorous discussion. Expectations would need to be carefully managed in terms of work load, bearing in mind members of the Board were volunteering their time.

The IEEE commented that, in regards to priority number 6 and its focus on end-users, the difficulty lay in the definition of the end-user, which depends on the interlocutor to a great extent; for some, such as space agencies and other service providers, the end-user represents Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups, whereas for others, citizens would be the end-users.

The US reminded the Executive Committee that, although it is helpful to have the Executive Committee and engagement priorities, GEO remains a big tent and is open to a broad spectrum of activities; the existence of priorities should not be construed to imply exclusivity.

The Chair agreed that bottom-up activities will continue, but the agreed engagement priorities allow for a more top-down emphasis which should allow for clearer messaging on GEO's activities. With respect to defining who are the end-users, GEO should be open to multiple categories where data and information from Earth observations (EO) can inform, ranging from farming and fishing communities, to ministries who take policy decisions. What is important is that GEO be able to showcase examples where lives have been changed by EO, or how EO have influenced policy decisions.

Mexico noted that the United Nations (UN) is a very specific end-user of EO, and GEO has a relevant role to play in the SDG process through participation in various working groups. Specifically, GEO has co-led development of the EO and geospatial information working group, including the establishment of task teams for analysis of several SDG Indicators. The fact that their work has been well-received shows that the UN has been reaping benefits of GEO's participation.

Outcome: The Executive Committee supported the Lead Co-Chair priorities, with the addition of identifying a Lead Co-Chair for 2018.

3 STRATEGIC OUTLOOK 2017 AND BEYOND

3.1 Report from the Working Group on Roles and Responsibilities (Document 4 – for decision)

Ms Yana Gevorgyan gave the presentation on behalf of the Working Group (WG). She noted that the work was based on the respective Key Functions as described in the GEO Rules of Procedure:

- The Executive Committee deals with mid- and long-term strategies needed to drive the implementation of GEO's 10-year Strategic Plan based, on the decisions of the Plenary;
- The Programme Board deals with the Work Programme (WP), through which it steers, guides and facilitates the implementation of the Strategic Plan based on the priorities and guidance set forth by the Executive Committee; and

- The Secretariat deals with the day-to-day operations that underpin all of GEO's activities.

Thus, these bodies operate on differing timescales, with the Executive Committee focusing on longer time spans given the enduring nature of strategic outlooks, the Programme Board focusing on the mid-term time-spans implicit in oversight of the 3-year WP, and the Secretariat operating on multiple time-scales in support of both the Executive Committee and Programme Board.

The WG further proposed a reduction of Executive Committee meetings, to just two per year:

- A mid-year meeting to discuss operational issues, progress in organizational priorities and programmatic goals, review Key Performance Indicator data, and discuss engagement actions; and
- A meeting during the week of the GEO Plenary, including:
 - A two-to-three hour meeting on the day before the Plenary to allow for any urgent/last-minute discussion and handling of issues related to preparedness for the Plenary; and
 - A one to one-and-a-half day meeting immediately following the Plenary to review outcomes from Plenary, and sketch the outline for the work ahead in consideration of long-term strategic issues.

In response to a question posed by Japan, the Chair explained that the Roles and Responsibilities of the GEO entities as presented in the document did not represent any changes in their functions and duties as detailed in the GEO Rules of Procedure; rather this document attempted to clarify and elucidate the roles of the three entities in practical terms.

France was generally supportive of the document; however, the absence of any references to the GEO Plenary was noted.

CEOS commented this was an internal document which meant to clarify boundaries and prevent future misunderstandings. However, the distinction made between Director and Secretariat was perhaps overemphasized; GEO has a Secretariat led by a Director.

Mexico agreed with France that it would be helpful to include a few lines on the roles and responsibilities of Plenary. Mexico also felt that, as portrayed in the document, the Secretariat tended to be underutilized as it is concerned with more than just day-to-day management, but also has an analytical role to play in implementing the strategy set forth, which should also be reflected in the document.

The Chair advised that, since this was an internal document, it should be noted in the meeting minutes that the objective was simply to further clarify the roles of the Executive Committee, Programme Board and Secretariat vis-à-vis each other, but that it was not intended to modify or replace the GEO Rules of Procedure.

As for the proposal to reduce Executive Committee meetings to twice per year, Australia questioned the efficiency of this approach, especially the requirement to digest a large amount of information during Plenary to prepare for the post-Plenary Executive Committee meeting.

China agreed on the benefits of reducing travel to twice per year for Executive Committee meetings, but would like to see the mid-year meeting held earlier in the year to allow ample time for work prior to Plenary.

Mexico would appreciate reducing meetings to twice per year and viewed the mid-year as perhaps being a longer one, offering the chance to analyse and plan the Executive Committee's long-term strategy. A suggestion would be to collocate the Work Programme Symposium, Executive Committee and Programme Board meetings.

France noted that normal practice in the corporate world is to have two meetings per year. France viewed the post-Plenary meeting as very important, one that could set up subgroups who would then examine specific issues via teleconference, between official meetings of the Executive Committee.

Finland agreed that greater use of electronic means could be employed to handle Executive Committee business between physical meetings.

The US commented that meeting twice per year would require an engaged Lead Co-Chair and continuous communication if gaps are to be avoided in the inter-meeting intervals. The US also noted that fewer physical meetings would require the Executive Committee to be more forward-looking in order to adequately determine strategy. Finally, as it is burdensome on developing nations to travel so much, fewer meetings might make it more feasible for them to fully engage.

Japan supported the concept of biannual physical meetings and would support teleconferencing if necessary in the interim, but wanted to know in which year the new schedule would be implemented.

Colombia also supported a reduction to two meetings annually, but emphasized the increased responsibility of the Lead Co-chair this structure would entail. Increased communication from the Secretariat would also be important, and any extraordinary meetings could be handled through teleconferencing.

The UK was also supportive of meeting biannually, as well as for the idea of combining the mid-year meeting with the Work Programme Symposium.

The Chair concluded by noting there was general support for the idea of moving to a biannual Committee meeting schedule, including pre- and post-Plenary, but that clarity was needed regarding the timing and coupling with other meetings as suggested. The WG was therefore requested to come back to the July Committee meeting with a proposal on these points for consideration.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee recognized the efforts of the WG and approved the document with additional input, which will inform further development of nuanced meetings schedule. Executive Committee supported the roles and responsibilities articulated in the report.
- The 39th Executive Committee meeting report to include the proviso that: 1) the objective of the WG was to clarify roles among the Executive Committee, the Programme Board and the Secretariat only; and 2) the document does not change or replace the existing GEO Rules of Procedure.
- There was agreement on the proposal for two Committee meetings per year, starting in 2018; timing and co-location of future meetings to be further examined by the WG, with a proposal ready for the 40th Executive Committee meeting.

Action 39.1: Roles and Responsibilities WG to provide proposal for timing of two Executive Committee meetings per year, starting in 2018. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

3.2 Executive Committee 2017 Programme of Work (Presentation – for discussion)

The Chair presented the Executive Committee 2017 Programme of Work, including principal agenda points, preparatory actions and deliverables. As of the 39th Executive Committee meeting, the following items had been delivered:

Respective roles and responsibilities (GEO Executive Committee, GEO Programme Board and GEO Secretariat);

- Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan revision;
- Commercial Sector Engagement follow-up;
- Key Performance Indicators review;

- GEO Programme Board update;
- GEO user-centred initiatives update;
- Process for recruitment of a GEO Secretariat Director initiated; and
- Deliverables for the 40th Executive Committee include:
 - Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan update; and
 - Commercial Sector Engagement update and modus operandi proposal.

Outcome: The Executive Committee 2017 Programme of Work was adopted with the addition of the need to name a Lead Co-Chair for 2018.

3.3 Secretariat 2017 Programme of Work (Presentation – for discussion)

The Secretariat Director presented the Secretariat 2017 Programme of Work, which highlighted plans and timetables for Secretariat Operations, as well as activities centred on Engagement and Communications and Work Programme Coordination. The Director emphasized that Secretariat will ensure alignment with the Executive Committee Programme of Work to make sure it is synchronized and working with the Executive Committee to achieve the desired deliverables. A comprehensive staffing plan was also presented, and the Director noted that secondments for Societal Benefit Areas (SBAs) are declining, which raised the question of the role of SBAs in light of current priorities. Currently, there is a call for a Disaster management expert, not to fill the SBA as such but rather in support of the Sendai Framework and Disaster Engagement Priority; other SBAs such as Energy and Mineral Resources Management and Infrastructure and Transport Management have little or no expertise in the Secretariat.

CEOS commented that there was nothing “religious” about the SBAs; they had been created, perhaps somewhat arbitrarily, at the inception of GEO as a way to divide and conquer, and engage with those communities providing and needing services. Maybe it is time to reconsider them and divide the world in a different way.

The US responded that the SBAs had been revised considerably with the new Strategic Plan, but the message has not gotten out to the community. The SBAs serve as a shop window to the external world, illustrating the use of EO in various application areas. The SBAs are also a way for the community to see themselves in GEO, perhaps as a way to pique interest before deciding on contributing to a given Initiative or Flagship. The US further commented that, given the limited Secretariat resources, it would be helpful to see a matrix of priorities and the activities that are staffed. It was postulated that continuity should be institutional and not personal, involving appropriate application of expertise and a retirement plan for those activities no longer appropriately staffed. Finally, the US would like to see more outcome criteria for a given activity, described actively with “deliverable” verbs as opposed to more passive “attendance” verbs.

The IOC observed that the SBAs are intended to be user-focused; however, the representation on Programme Board comes overwhelmingly from the provider side. Some mechanism is needed to connect users to providers. Perhaps some activity focussed on the SBAs could be used to demonstrate successful instances of the value chain, from providers of EO to users.

The Director responded that true user engagement seems to happen more within the Flagships than the SBAs, a model that could be expanded more generally to Initiatives. The Flagships mentioned in the 2017 Programme of Work were included because of the significant contributions made to support them, including staffing. Others, such as the Oceans and Society: BluePlanet Initiative, were noted as an example of Initiatives that are largely staffed outside the Secretariat, requiring only a light touch from the Secretariat. She agreed with the need to strengthen descriptions of deliverables in documents provided to the Executive Committee. In terms of secondments, she observed that a voluntary, best efforts organization does not have the same tools and controls over 100% of its resources as does a

Member organization. She added that the Trust Fund was used for employing individuals to meet the highest priorities, and that secondments, in consultation with the seconding organization, were sometimes redirected to meet priorities when possible.

The Chair concluded that the document was useful, but that the challenge lay in the alignment of Programme Board and Secretariat activities with the Executive Committee priorities and timetables.

Outcome: The Executive Committee noted the Secretariat 2017 Programme of Work, in particular:

- The SBAs can be regarded as “shop windows” into the GEO WP and communicated accordingly;
- The need for ensuring alignment of Programme Board and Secretariat activities with the agenda and priorities of the Executive Committee; and
- The need for sharpened definitions used in the report (e.g. deliverables and KPIs) and their articulation.

Action 39.2: Secretariat to reissue Programme of Work, with particular attention to outcomes of the 39th Executive Committee meeting. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

3.4 Review of the Key Performance Indicators from the GEO Strategic Plan Reference Document (Document 5 – for discussion)

Finland presented the document, noting that the notion of indicators would apply to both the Executive Committee and all of GEO. Eventually, web statistics will be included and the GEO Plenary should be apprised annually with highlights of progress, both successful and less so.

Mr Craig Larlee, Secretariat Monitoring and Evaluation Expert, added that these KPIs should be considered a starting point, and that the production of KPIs on a reliable, consistent basis, needed a system to support them. Data collection can be as simple as things that are already being done, and the challenge is how to provide the information in a way that is comparable, consistent, and targeted, building on existing tools and processes as far as possible. Any amount of work in this effort should be a small and incremental.

South Africa suggested that it might be better to package indicator information on the basis of language that GEO has begun to adopt. An example would be Flagships where the indicators could be the extent to which decisions are taken by GEO BON, or how the GFOI community is informed by EO. The SBAs could also be another framework for development of indicators. What is important is to ask the team to think about the best set of indicators and targets to give an indication of whether GEO is successful or not in implementing its mission.

The Chair added that some measurement of uptake by users would also be very important.

China agreed with the document, noting the difficulty of building a sound system of indicators in a short time, one that is based on the strategic plan and objectives of GEO.

Japan observed that the quality of indicators was critical. The current set was largely acceptable for a qualitative analysis in the short term, but a more rigorous set was needed for a deeper, more quantitative assessment.

One PB co-chair (IOC) commented that, as much as possible, the added-value of GEO should be measured through indicators. It is a simple thing to measure numbers of meetings, but it is much more difficult to measure outcomes.

One PB co-chair (EEA) pointed out that the indicators will be creating data for someone to use, thus there is a need to understand what types of decisions can be taken around them as a practicality sense-check. Additionally, as GEO is voluntary, best-efforts endeavour, indicators for this type of enterprise are not actual KPIs, but should rather be geared more towards enabling a course-check as opposed to measuring performance.

Finland emphasized the need to find the right level of information, such as the number of times GEO resources were utilized to take a decision. KPIs might then allow for a more in-depth evaluation. The essential point is that GEO needs to build its reputation and show it is making a difference, and that world is, indeed, a better place because it exists.

Mr Larlee agreed, adding that indicators should deliver information useful to the Executive Committee and the Programme Board for making decisions, and that the process should also be two-way and iterative. The current difficulty with making an evaluation is that everything is text-based – Initiative and Flagship implementation plans and progress reports contain much unstructured text, and it is important to avoid asking for unnecessary information.

South Africa responded that KPIs may be for more internal consumption. However, performance assessment is not just an administrative exercise; the Executive Committee Members represent the Plenary and Ministers, and information that justifies continued investments in GEO needs to be communicated to the respective governments.

The Chair summarized by stating that, although everyone understands there are limits to measuring progress (i.e. it is not possible to measure everything; and in some case it is not even evident what the baseline is), there is a critical need for Executive Committee Members to be able to demonstrate to their respective governments the added value of work being done in GEO, in order to justify continued investments.

- **Outcome:** There was general approval of process as outlined in the document, noting the need for information to demonstrate the added-value of work being done, in order to justify continued and strengthened investments in GEO. In this regard, it was suggested to implement a process of monitoring progress of GEOSS Implementation in order to track movement and provide appropriate measures of performance.

Action 39.3: Secretariat to coordinate revision of KPI implementation plan. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

4 REPORT FROM THE SELECTION PANEL FOR THE GEO SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR (DOCUMENT 6 – FOR DECISION)

Mr Jack Metthey (EC) presented the report, noting that a special focus had been placed on the desired profile for the director and that certain features were deemed important, such as level of education, number of years of experience, the ability to “sell” GEO, the need for scientific literacy, good financial management skills, and, more generally, maturity of judgment and creativity. He informed the Executive Committee that the selection panel was seeking:

- Endorsement regarding the vacancy notice;
- Approval of the proposed timeline; and
- Help in publicizing the announcement.

Once the submission period ended, he explained the plan was to achieve a ranked list, with a very clear number one candidate, and strong second and third candidates. Once the list has been established, it will go before the 41st Executive Committee at its meeting prior to GEO-XIV in October 2017, to discuss the ranked list and make a selection. The successful candidate would be named before the end of 2017, so that a transition time could take place where the incoming Director could work alongside the current Director, to make the transition as seamless as possible. He concluded the report by noting that the selection panel had worked closely with WMO to ensure alignment with all administrative procedures.

Finland suggested revising language mentioning ‘knowledge of Microsoft’.

Mexico noted that, although the primacy of direction came from the Executive Committee, some mention should be made regarding guidance from Plenary under the section on Duties and Responsibilities.

The Chair thanked the selection panel for its work, and noted, apart from a few technical edits and reference to Plenary, that there was consensus on both the vacancy announcement as well as the timeline for recruitment.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee approved the Vacancy Notice and the Recruitment Timeline. The Executive Committee further noted that:

- a transition period is foreseen in the schedule to allow for a “seamless transition”; and
- Members are asked to widely publicize the announcement.

Action 39.4: Selection Panel to modify Vacancy announcement. **Due: 13 March 2017.**

- Correct “Microsoft office applications” in announcement text; and
- Include reference to Plenary under ‘Duties and Responsibilities’.

5 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE GEO SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR 2017 (IN CAMERA –GEO PRINCIPALS AND DIRECTOR) (DOCUMENT 7 – FOR INFORMATION)

Excerpt from Executive Summary:

The Executive Committee completed the performance evaluation of the Secretariat Director in an in-camera Session on 9 March 2017. The Committee is fully satisfied with the performance of the Secretariat Director, and has full confidence in her successfully completing her current term through June 2018.

Meeting adjourned at 17:00

Friday 10 March 2017*Meeting convened at 09:00***6 REPORT FROM THE PROGRAMME BOARD (PRESENTATION – FOR DISCUSSION)**

Programme Board co-chairs Tim Haigh (EEA) and Albert Fischer (IOC) presented the report, including highlights from the Board's 5th meeting in February, an outline of the concept for the Work Programme Symposium, an outline of the next phase of the SDG analysis process, initial feedback on the preparatory work done by Finland on the performance indicators, and anticipated inputs to 40th and 41st Executive Committees as outlined in the Board's plan of work for 2017. Among others, sample highlights from the report included:

- Acknowledgement that the process for selection of PB co-chairs, PO Observers to the Executive Committee, and lottery for term-lengths of PB members, had been successfully conducted using electronic means during December 2016 and January 2017, thus optimizing use of time at the 5th PB meeting in February 2017;
- Messages from the GEO Lead Co-Chair, included the need to:
 - Ensure the four existing Flagships become strong and visible;
 - Shape the Work Programme to bring ensure focus on priorities, coherence across activities, create linkages and synergies and remove redundancies; and
 - Strengthen and highlight delivery in response to priorities identified by Plenary and the Executive Committee.
- An emphasis for the 2017 Work Programme Symposium on:
 - The “3+1” priority areas (SDGs, Climate, and Disaster Risk Reduction) + AfriGEOSS;
 - A “mutual capacity building effort” for major policy initiatives; and
 - Visibility of Flagships and key Initiatives to show a transition in GEO activities to being more demand-driven.
- Feedback on indicators included:
 - Recommendation that indicators be used for regular monitoring of progress in achieving/sustaining core functions; less certainty whether indicators should be KPIs, for which a (target) performance metric would be needed;
 - Currently, there are too many indicators; it is preferable to have fewer, relevant (core function-related) ones and extend later as needed. Indicators should reflect demonstrable impact of GEO, not just uptake of EO; and
 - A separate process needed for evaluation of GEO (and monitoring of FT).

The presentation concluded with a summary of the PB plan of work for 2017 and subgroups set up to examine the next phase of the WP analysis in support of the SDGs; longer-term strategies for the Work Programme Symposium; and establishing a framework for monitoring progress with indicators.

The Chair thanked the co-chairs for their report, and commented that the output of the PB after just one meeting was impressive.

The US commented that the three engagement priority areas appeared several times in the report, and wondered to what extent these might tend to crowd out other, non-related activities.

Mr Haigh responded that the Community Activities will always leave room for any type of contribution that an entity might want to make to the WP, and that activity can evolve with time to become more significant as an Initiative or Flagship. Although the priorities are clear and there is a need to demonstrate that GEO is delivering against them, the message should be communicated that there is space for other activities. The job of the PB is to ensure there is coherence and consistency across the WP while guarding against alienating segments of the community.

With respect to the SBAs, South Africa asked whether the PB would be in position to define the added-value that GEO can bring to them. Examples might include data provision and curation where the role for GEO would be to go one step upstream to gather intelligence about data. Knowing the kinds of data that are in the GCI would be useful for application development.

Mr Fischer responded that GEO currently is more about the providers than users of EO data and information. The SBAs could be the place in the WP where interfaces between users and providers are identified, established and maintained.

The IEEE wondered whether GEO creates the need for EO data, or answers the need, citing that the scientific community is using only 2% of the data provided by satellites. In particular, the uptake of EO by the research community should be fostered by the WP.

The Director reminded the Executive Committee that there were two additional engagement priorities that, although deemed to need more work at this point, are nevertheless waiting in the wings. The GEO community should be encouraged to make contributions to the WP that will cause them to mature, and the PB should note this in the later years of their three-year WP.

The Chair concluded by congratulating the new PB and co-chairs for the work accomplished, and reminded everyone of the need to align the priorities and agendas of the PB and Secretariat with those of the Committee.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Congratulated the new PB and co-chairs for work accomplished;
- Reiterated the importance of alignment of agendas and priorities among the Executive Committee, the PB and Secretariat;
- Emphasized the need to showcase selected examples of where EO contributed to achievement of the SDGs, and scaling up where possible; and
- Acknowledged the PB 2017 plan of work.

7 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

7.1 Report from the Commercial Sector Working Group (Document 8 – for discussion)

Mr. Steven Ramage, Senior External Relations Manager, presented the document, citing that the Commercial Sector Working Group (CSWG) confirmed that participation of the Commercial Sector in GEO is in line with the GEO Rules of Procedure. He mentioned that, in fact, some of GEO's POs are from the Commercial Sector and are already engaged with GEO, noting that some of these will attend the GEOSS Data provider workshop in Florence in May 2017. The Commercial Sector drives economic growth and looks to identify where to 'fill gaps' for revenue generation, as well as make use of data in service of society. In line with the GEO WP, data provision through the GCI and advice on best practices are also important through work with data users.

The Commercial Sector (CS) wants to engage with senior leaders of GEO and the GEO community, as compared to another meeting with themselves. Proposed activities are:

1. Data provision around broad open data, e.g. Planet, Digital Globe, etc.;

2. Capacity building, through corporate social responsibility and youth engagement; and
3. Innovation, using open EO data in the GCI.

Proposed engagement methods include publishing Calls for Opportunities to contribute to GEOSS, reviewing existing engagement, establishing conditions for memoranda of understanding and targeting outreach and communication. The CSWG has called for open and continuous dialogue for promotion of Commercial Sector participation in the GEO XIV Plenary and other meetings.

The Executive Committee proposed forming a Commercial Sector Advisory Group, which would comprise membership from each caucus of the Commercial Sector Advisory Board. The Advisory Board would formulate best practices of inviting the Commercial Sector to GEO events. Commercial Sector data and financial contributions could support GEO. A suggestion from a Commercial Sector peer on the CSWG was that GEO could publish Calls for Contributions to GEO WP Activities, through the GEO Appathon and AIP pilots. It was suggested that in advance of publishing the request, a review of previous efforts is undertaken and establish lessons learned in order to build on successes or avoid any identified pitfalls.

The Committee called attention to the fact that UN-GGIM has a Private Sector Network where the Commercial Sector is seen as having valuable influence as a partner, but not as a decision maker. GEO will investigate taking advantage of the UN-GGIM Private Sector group in the interest of leveraging existing mechanisms. It was also noted that there must be a clear objective of working with the Commercial Sector, with Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) focusing on KPIs – though reservations were also expressed about the long-term viability and usefulness of MOUs.

The Co-Chair noted that the Commercial Sector strategy describes the topics of engagement such as data provision, capacity and innovation, but it is less clear on who will be the subject of engagement, whether they will have to register, or how the modus operandi will be defined, in terms of rights and obligations. He suggested the Commercial Sector Advisory Group may approach the Executive Committee on well-defined topics, but underlined that they will not be part of the governance structure.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee welcomed the report and noted the current on-going activities with the commercial sector, and requested that further work is needed, including:

- Less emphasis on the “why and what”, more emphasis on the “who and how” (modus operandi);
- The creation of a CS advisory group to interact with the Executive Committee, for input on how this engagement (co-production, co-design) is foreseen;
 - Explore whether the UN-GGIM CS Network can provide this platform; and
 - Consideration of lessons learned with respect to the Appathon(s) and AIPs.

Action 39.5: Secretariat to revise Commercial Sector report. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

- Strengthen ‘who’ and ‘how’, with a view towards creating an Advisory Committee to engage with the Committee.

Action 39.6: Secretariat to explore leveraging the UN-GGIM CS Network. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 39.7: Secretariat to compile lessons learned with respect to commercial sector engagement with the Appathon(s) and AIPs. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

7.2 GEO Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan 2017-2019 (Document 9 – for decision)

Japan proposal on Engagement Action for Greenhouse Gas Monitoring

The Secretariat presented the Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan as a ‘living document’. The top three priority areas: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Climate, and Disasters, were identified in Document 8 of the 38th Executive Committee meeting and approved at GEO-XIII. GEO will also consider the remaining priority areas of resilient cities and ecosystem accounting through linkages and interactions in order to strengthen these efforts per Plenary deliberations.

The Programme Board has started mapping SDGs to the GEO WP and the Annex of the Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan lists other areas in Climate and Disasters which link to the WP through targeted events. For example, engagement with UNICEF through UN-GGIM led to their statement of need, how EO can help, and how UNICEF can access and provide data through the GCI. Further examples of successful engagement processes for the three priority areas will be showcased at GEO-XIV.

The Executive Committee noted that for Disasters, the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction will be held in Mexico in May and there is an opportunity to give a higher profile to geospatial at that event. Regarding Climate, GEO has Exhibitor status with UNFCCC and the current focus of engagement is on Greenhouse Gas (GHG) monitoring. GHG has on-going programmes with complex interactions, and GEO should be focused linking these efforts and on other elements of the Paris Agreement, such as mitigation and adaptation, through land use change and the transformation of land cover from one type to another, requiring a database of land use types, physical and socio-economic data, which only GEO can provide. The Chair noted that the UNFCCC COP 23 will be held in Bonn and will feature a side-event on GEO and GEOSS.

The Executive Committee discussed the fact that the UN High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2017 needs GEO Member collaboration to ensure attendance, in particular from those countries submitting reports.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee approved the proposed the GEO Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan 2017-2019 plan with additional input to inform the next iteration, by calling for:

- Examples of successful engagement processes to showcase at GEO-XIV;
- Identification of communication mechanisms to facilitate engagement;
- Consideration of an ‘adaptation’ emphasis under the Paris Agreement, and alignment with PB outcomes, in the next draft of the plan;
- Positioning GEO as unique provider of relevant data (e.g. geographic, demographic, socio-economic) for all priority areas (i.e. enhanced KPIs); Encouraging GEO Member collaboration to ensure attendance in the UN-HLPF, particularly for those countries submitting reports; and
- Future iterations of the Engagement plan should include an indication of the work-flow of activities.

Action 39.8: Secretariat to revise the Engagement Strategy, with particular attention to outcomes of the 39th Executive Committee meeting. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 39.9: Secretariat to work with key partners (e.g. UNFCCC, IPCC, CEOS, GCOS, ICOS, etc.) to design a Side-Event at COP-23. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

7.3 Resources for GEO (Presentation – for discussion)

The Budget Working Group (BWG) observed that funding for GEO is often ad-hoc and is impacted by currency exchanges. The BWG objective is greater resource mobilization to support the GEO Trust Fund with strengthened consistency and stability of funding. A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis was presented.

The Co-Chair observed that GEO is more like a club that depends on the enthusiasm of its voluntary members who contribute to the Trust Fund, rather than following a decision based on subscription fees

and international status. He urged members of the Executive Committee to contribute and/or increase contributions to the GEO Trust Fund. Given the demonstrated added-value of GEO, the Secretariat should carefully but stridently strengthen language requesting «voluntary contributions» from GEO Members and POs. In addition, Members can strengthen in-country collaboration where investments are being made in similar endeavours, including but limited to funding to other international information infrastructures.

Outcomes: The Co-Chair:

- Urged Executive Committee Members to contribute and/or increase contributions to the GEO Trust Fund;
- Requested that, using strengthened language, «voluntary contributions» be carefully but stridently solicited from GEO Members and POs, given demonstrated added-value of GEO; and
- Encouraged Members of the Executive Committee to strengthen in-country collaboration where investments are being made in similar endeavours, including but not limited to other international information infrastructures.

Action 39.10: Secretariat to propose specific resourcing actions for the Executive Committee, noting outcomes of the 39th Executive Committee meeting. **Due: 40th Executive Committee meeting.**

8 REPORT OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP

8.1 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure 2016 (Document 10 – for information)

Mr Stuart Minchin presented the report on behalf of the BWG. He noted that the interim report was showing a surplus of CHF 388,000, but that this amount could fluctuate due to changes in exchange rates by the time the external audit report was completed. He also highlighted the fact that the actual income and expenditure was much lower than the approved 2016 Budget, due to the fact that actual contributions, both cash and in-kind, were lower than the amounts budgeted for an optimal level of resourcing of the Secretariat. The Secretariat was thus to be commended for keeping expenditures in line with actual contributions. As a final point, he explained that the report would be modified to show support for the Secretariat staffing plan.

China commented that, since data sharing is a key tenant of GEO, there should be a fixed-term position in the Secretariat to support data-sharing and related work, subject to approval at GEO-XIV Plenary.

Mr Minchin responded that the BWG has cautioned the Secretariat to be conservative with fixed-term positions given future budget uncertainties. Clearly if the budget increases, this would be a key position.

The Chair summarized by asking that the report be revised before the Executive Committee gives its final approval, and also commended the Secretariat for operating within budget.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation to the BWG for its efforts in 2016. The Executive Committee reinforced the need for more GEO Members to contribute to the GEO Trust Fund;
- Interim report to be revised; and
- Anticipated contributions had been CHF 7.2 million for 2016; CHF 4 million was received. The Secretariat was commended for ensuring expenditures matched contributions.

Action 39.11: BWG to revise report, noting outcomes of the 39th Executive Committee meeting. **Due: 24 March 2017.**

8.2 2017 Income and Expenditure Forecast and Implementation of Staffing Plan (Document 11 - for information)

Mr Stuart Minchin presented the report on behalf of BWG, and briefed the Executive Committee on the income and expenditure forecast, noting that Trust Fund income was projected to be CHF 4,071 million, and the projected budget was CHF 4,535 million, leaving a projected surplus of CHF 122,000 for the year. Ms Patricia Geddes, Senior Administrative Manager, reviewed the current status of Secretariat staffing, noting new arrivals:

- Mr Craig Larlee assumed his duties as Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at the Secretariat on 15 February, 2017; and
- Mr William Sonntag commenced his secondment from the US Environment Protection Agency to assume the duties of Scientific and Technical Officer for the SDGs.

CEOS queried whether priority could be given to hiring a user-needs and engagement expert at the Secretariat, noting that there was much consensus on the importance of engaging users.

The Director responded that additional resources, either direct or in kind, would be required for this need.

The Chair agreed that it was important to allocate resources in alignment with priorities expressed by Plenary and the Executive Committee while recognizing there are more priorities than resources.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee extended its appreciation to the BWG for its leadership over this past year, and also to the Secretariat for ensuring a balanced budget was achieved; and
- Additional resources are needed to implement emerging priorities, in view of emphasis on end-user involvement. **Action 39.12:** Secretariat to seek secondment for user-needs position. **Due: 15 April 2017.**

9 GEO LEGAL STATUS UPDATE (DOCUMENT 12 - FOR INFORMATION)

Ms Patricia Geddes provided the update on the GEO Legal Status. The process agreed by the Executive Committee at its 37th Session in July had now been completed. This had commenced by the signing of a renewed Standing Arrangement between WMO and the GEO Secretariat, which through an exchange of official letters between WMO and Switzerland had been formally noted by the Swiss authorities. The result is an enhanced Legal Standing under the WMO Host Arrangement.

Outcome: The Executive Committee noted new WMO-Swiss agreement that acknowledges GEO and expressed its appreciation to Switzerland, the WMO and the Secretariat for the work on enhancing GEO's legal status.

10 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

10.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 13 – for information)

The Director presented the report. She noted that the Kingdom of Cambodia joined GEO on 23 January as its 104th Member. Other highlights included:

- Support given to the Programme Board (PB), including conducting the electronic election of co-chairs and PO Observers on the Executive Committee as well the lottery for term-lengths, and preparations for the 5th PB meeting in February;
- Development of the Engagement Implementation Plan as well as the Commercial Sector Engagement Plan, in partnership with the Subgroup;
- International engagement featuring the Secretariat as an anchor Partner to the Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD), which is contributing to a “Data 4 SDGs Toolbox” designed to provide methods for supporting the SDGs and sustainability policy, and engaging in the Inter-Agency Expert Working Group (IAEG) of the UN-GGIM to integrate Earth observation data from GEO into the UN process for developing and supporting the SDGs;
- Advances in regional engagement through AfriGEOSS in response to the 26th African Union Summit mandate for AfriGEOSS to support the implementation of the African Space Policy and Strategy; and AOGEOSS with the successful hosting of the 9th GEOSS Asia-Pacific Symposium and the ensuing Tokyo Statement;
- Advances in national engagement through organization of a Public Affairs Session on Developing a Knowledge Base Linking Earth Observations to Societal Information Needs", and a GEO Town Hall at the American Geophysical Union (AGU) annual Fall meeting; and interfacing with the new joint UK GEO/CEOS Office sponsored by NERC to examine how the UK can better contribute to global efforts to reduce disaster risk with satellite Earth observations.

Other activities the Secretariat has helped organize and support are contained in the report with respect to programmatic developments, data sharing, GEOSS implementation, the GEOSS Portal, both space-based and in-situ observation coordination, GEONETCast, Radio-Frequency Coordination, communications, and information technology.

The Chair acknowledged the comprehensive report and expressed appreciation for the dedication of the Secretariat. He also called for a modification of format for mission reporting, to bring a sharper focus on the outcomes.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee noted the report and expressed its appreciation for the continuing efforts of the Secretariat, particularly in streamlining activities related to the SDGs. The Executive Committee also acknowledged the Secretariat’s careful stewardship of GEO’s limited resources.

10.2 Review of Applications for Participating Organizations and Observers (Document 14 – for decision)

The Director reviewed the applications for Participating Organizations, noting that the Earthmind application, a carry-over from the 38th Executive Committee meeting deliberations, had been clarified with Earthmind being in full compliance with Swiss regulations.

France expressed gratitude to the Director for clarifying the status of Earthmind.

China was unable to fully support the application for Conservation International (CI) since there was some ambiguity as to CI’s position on the One-China policy, based on information contained in their website.

The US suggested that conditional approval be given to the four applicants, with full acceptance granted once the CI website had been modified to China’s satisfaction.

The Chair concurred and suggested the matter be followed up between the Director and himself.

Outcomes: Pending confirmation of Conservation International website compliance with a One-China policy, the Executive Committee will adopt the Secretariat recommendations, and will approve applications for the following four Organizations:

1. Earthmind;
2. Conservation International (CI);
3. Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN);
4. United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Action 39.13: Secretariat to confirm One-China policy with respect to Conservation International application; inform Lead Co-Chair so that approval of all PO applications can be announced. **Due: 24 March 2017.** *NB: acceptance by China of its satisfaction with the modification of the website in question will be communicated to the Lead Co-Chair who will then confirm with the GEO Secretariat that the approval of the PO applications can proceed.*

10.3 2016 Report of the Executive Committee (Document 15 – for decision)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee approved the Summary Report of its deliberations in 2016, which is comprised of the Executive Summaries of the three Meetings held in 2016 -- March, July and November.

11 GEO-XIII REVIEW (PRESENTATION – FOR INFORMATION)

11.1 Lessons Learned (Content, Statements, Logistics)

11.2 Participation Statistics

Ms Geddes gave the presentation on both lessons learned and participation statistics, noting that generally favourable ratings had been given in response to a survey featuring questions pertaining to the Panel Sessions, Side Events, Exhibition, handling of Statements, and overall impression of GEO-XIII Week (41 responses received out of 300 potential). She also noted the GEO-XIII Plenary had been one of the best attended, not counting those coupled with a Ministerial meeting. Highlights of other feedback received included:

Panel Sessions:

- One per day with 3-4 Panelists (maximum); and
- Allow more time for questions from audience.

Work Programme and Budget Presentations

- Re-engineer WP and Budget presentations to highlight gaps and solicit contributions.

Method of Presenting Statements

- Good support for format. Needs more visibility.

GEO WEEK

- 4 days deemed sufficient; and
- Pre-Plenary interest to be built-up.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Noted with appreciation the GEO-XIII Review;

- Suggested applying the lessons learned (and survey questions) to all GEO meetings (e.g. the Work Programme Symposium); and
- Thanked again the Russian Federation hosts thanked for their hospitality and efficient organization of GEO-XIII Plenary Week.

12 GEO-XIV PLANNING

The US briefed the Executive Committee on the status of organization for the GEO-XIV Plenary. A planning team in the USA, has been set up, to organize the events. The US noted that the team is open to engagement from the GEO community and any interested parties may contact Ms Yana Gevorgyan (USA).

The Chair indicated Representatives from the EC, Japan and the GEO Secretariat will join the planning team. The PB co-chairs might also consider doing so. An important task of the planning team would be to identify showcases and Panel topics.

Insert a point about suggested focus of GEO-XIV being on Delivery/Deliverables?

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee issued guidance to focus the theme of GEO-XIV on Delivery/Deliverables The US Planning team welcomes participation; interested parties may contact Ms Yana Gevorgyan (USA);
- With the need to identify Panel topics quickly, the US called on the GEO community to identify success stories and speakers; the Work Programme Symposium would be a good opportunity to do so;
- The Secretariat, with the US Planning team, will prepare a detailed agenda for release in July.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The U.S. proposed modifying the GEO Rules of Procedure, to remove the reference to “approval of interim staff, including secondments”, by the Executive Committee. This duty may have been relevant at the commencement of the GEO Secretariat, but it was deemed no longer valid, particularly in reference to clarity on roles and responsibilities among the Executive Committee, the Programme Board and the Secretariat.

The Chair noted consensus for this action.

The 3rd Blue Planet Symposium, 31 May – 2 June 2017, College Park, MD, USA was noted.

Action 39.14: Secretariat to propose modification of the Rules of Procedure, Annex B, Article 2, removing the Executive Committee reference: “...and approve interim staff, including secondments.”

Due: 41st Executive Committee meeting / GEO-XIV.

14 SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

The Director reviewed the full list of action items, which met with the Executive Committee’s approval.

Meeting adjourned at 15:30

39th GEO Executive Committee List of Participants

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