

Report on the Tsunami Working Group activities to GEO-III

As Accepted at GEO-III

1 Meetings of the Working Group

The Tsunami Working Group had the following meetings:

Meeting	Date	Venue
1 st meeting	7-8 September 2005	UNESCO IOC, Paris, France
2 nd meeting	3-4 November 2005	WMO HQ, Geneva, Switzerland
Informal meeting	25 November 2005	APAT, Rome, Italy
3 rd meeting	27-28 February 2006	ESA HQ, Paris, France

2 Summary of the activities of the Working Group

In 2005, the activities of the Working Group were mainly devoted to

- identify, in the framework of the Tsunami related activities, a clear role for GEO and associated key priorities for action
- review and endorse the GEO Work Plan for 2006
- draft, discuss and approve the Terms of Reference of the Working Group itself (reported in Annex 1)

In 2006, the activities of the Working Group were mainly devoted to:

At the 3rd meeting, to:

- finalize 2006 Work Plan
- discuss a number of international initiatives on Disaster Management, i.e. UNOOSA-DMISCO, today approved as SPIDER program, WMO Natural Disaster Prevention and UNOSAT

- to discuss the possible extension of the Working Group to a “all” or “multi”- hazard Working Group/Committee,

and, in phase with GEO Work Plan activities and milestones, to provide :

- follow-up the execution of the work plan
- inputs for periodic progress reporting
- inputs for the 2007-2009 GEO Work Plan.

It was not possible, also because the Tsunami in July 2006, to convene a fourth meeting of the WG, but the Co-chairs managed to coordinate with the Secretariat and to provide inputs and guidance.

3 Conclusions

The progress on Tsunami related tasks in the GEO 2006 WorkPlan has reached less progress than expected, for a number of reasons (among which a “slow start” due to the organization of the tasks themselves).

After about one year of operations the need of slight adjustments in the approach and in the Work Plan has clearly emerged for the Tsunami related activities and this has been reflected in the 2007-2009 Work Plan issued by the GEO Secretariat in July.

In fact GEO activities (and associated tasks) have been rearranged in such a way that they are clearly contributing to the IOC Implementation Plan for Tsunami EW System and that specific coordination is put in place.

Moreover the areas in which GEO would effectively support IOC plans have been better focused and will be progressively introduced into the GEO Work Plans

These areas include, but are not limited to Systems interoperability, in particular cross calibration of different deep sea pressure sensors, secure and reliable communication in emergency cases, data distribution, availability of updated geographically referenced products to support . Risk Assessment and Preparedness.

Concerning the possible extension of the Working Group to a “all” or “multi”- hazard Working Group/Committee, a preliminary assessment is provided in Annex 2, underlining the opportunity of putting in place a “all” hazards Committee, while keeping the identity of the Tsunami WG, to work within the overall mandate of the Committee, but with clearly identified Terms of Reference (the ones in force today).

Should the Plenary endorse this proposal the Tsunami WG will, with the support of the Secretary, define the Terms of Reference of this new Committee and bring them to the approval of the Executive Committee at the earliest meeting after November 28, 2006.

Annex I

APPENDIX 5

(to the GEO Rules of procedure as adopted by GEO II)

Working Group on Tsunami Activities

Terms of Reference

NOTE: The GEO-II Plenary charged this Working Group with examining the possibility of expanding its mandate to All-Hazard activities.

Purpose

The GEO Working Group on All-Hazard Activities will support the coordinating activities of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and other national, regional, and international initiatives to realize effective warning and mitigation systems for natural hazards, as an integral part of a multi-hazard approach supported by GEOSS.

Objectives

1. Facilitate the coordination of international programmes on disaster prevention and mitigation
2. Develop a multi-hazard multi-purpose approach to early warning and crisis management
3. Promote the interoperability and compatibility of warning and mitigation systems through the development of standards and protocols
4. Facilitate the development of high-level stakeholders' commitments to warning and mitigation systems
5. Support and help ensure durability of capacity building related to infrastructure and training & education

Approach and Functions

1. Create discussion fora in which all parties of interest are expected to participate, including non-member countries and organizations. Involve existing national, regional and international scientific and technological organizations in order to make best use of existing expertise.
2. Identify gaps (technical, financial & skill-related) and design strategies to fill in these gaps
3. Act as a catalyzer and accelerate processes without interfering or duplicating efforts, building on GEO's collective action and groups/countries/organizations' individual action.

Annex II

Preliminary assessment on the possible extension of the Tsunami Working Group to a “multi”- hazard Working Group/Committee

Background

The GEO-II Plenary charged the Tsunami Working Group with examining the possibility of expanding its mandate to All-Hazard activities.

A thorough discussion took place during the 3rd meeting, where

“Official positions generally welcome the idea of an extension of GEO activities to multi-hazards. However rather than an extension of the current Tsunami Working Group, most positions recommend that (i) an additional structure be created in the form of a committee on multi-hazards (mission, structure (co-chairs, members), & terms of reference to be determined); and (ii) the Tsunami Working Group - unique in its scope and mandate - be maintained for a limited period of time, possibly as a sub-structure of a multi-hazard committee, with one major Caveat:

Several Working Group members pointed to the potential implications of creating a committee structure on multi-hazards for the functioning of GEO (currently based on four "transverse" standing committees: Architecture & Data, User Interface, Capacity Building, and Science & Technology).”

The matter was also briefly discussed by the Executive Committee, in its meeting in April 2006 with a preliminary recommendation that the Tsunami WG remains limited to its current mandate.

Even if GEO is currently organized as a matrix, where the lines are the four main features of the GEOSS (each of them overlooked by a Committee) and the columns are the nine SBA's (Societal Benefit Areas), the peculiarities of the Disasters SBA call in favour of a specific set-up within the current GEO working organization.

In fact, Disasters SBA is a rather peculiar Area for a number of reasons:

- It is highly multidisciplinary in itself, this being shown by the existence of two major “communities of practice”, one for meteo-hydrological hazards, the other for geohazards, which today are working separately and which, if integrated, may properly support a multi-hazard, multirisk approach.
- It is “crossing” and it is strongly linked to all other SBA's, both in terms of definition of vulnerability/risk and of effects of development and disruption of social and economic processes.
- It is based and requires from other SBA's, to support t the full cycle of the Disaster Risk Management, basic inputs for the pre and post disaster phases (like meteo forecast, reference geographic products, land cover,) that are used to derive specific risk management products)