



GROUP ON
EARTH OBSERVATIONS

GEO-V

19-20 November 2008

Report of the Executive Committee to Plenary

Document 14

This document is submitted to GEO-V for information.

Report of the Executive Committee to Plenary

1 INTRODUCTION

Since GEO-IV in November 2007, the Executive Committee has met three times. This report summarizes the discussions and decisions taken at the 12th Executive Committee meeting, held in Geneva on 26 and 27 March 2008, the 13th Executive Committee meeting, held in Geneva on 15 and 16 July, and the 14th meeting, held in Bucharest on 18 November immediately prior to GEO-V. Once approved, the minutes of Executive Committee meetings can be found on the GEO website.

2 DECISIONS AND KEY ISSUES OF THE 12TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting was attended by new Committee members representing Argentina, Australia, Norway, Panama and Uganda, which were elected at GEO-IV. The GEO Co-Chair from China served as Chair.

The Committee decided that, in order to improve the circulation of information, the minutes of each Plenary should be distributed to the Principals for comment four weeks after the meeting and then to the full GEO community two weeks later with a specific mention of “draft, for information only, to be submitted for approval at next Plenary”.

The Committee discussed the importance of informing the GEO community of the Secretariat’s needs for seconded experts, as they perform a major part of what GEO does, and invited the Secretariat to share with Members and Participating Organizations the need for additional seconded experts.

The Executive Committee expressed the need to balance income and expenditure within a given year and transfer activities to Members whenever possible. It recommended that the Director share with Members and Participating Organizations the need for additional contributions to the Trust Fund.

The Committee agreed that, using the EC’s document on Secretariat Performance Indicators as a base, the Secretariat should develop a proposal on Performance Indicators for discussion at the next meeting.

Following the mandate given by Plenary, the Committee approved a document on Secretariat Arrangements and decided that this document becomes Annex E of the GEO Rules of Procedure (see annex below). Following the procedure set out in this document, a Panel was established. The Panel was composed of all the members of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee then unanimously endorsed the proposal of the Panel that the current Director of the GEO Secretariat be reappointed for a second three-year term with effect from 1 January 2009.

The Executive Committee endorsed the GEO logo and agreed that the Secretariat should protect it by registering it with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). It asked the Secretariat to draft a document on branding and publication guidelines for consideration at the next meeting.

The Executive Committee was presented with a report on the activities of the C4 and the Committees. It recommended that interaction between Committees be reinforced.

The Committee reached consensus on having the Initial Operating Capability (IOC) for the GEO Common Infrastructure (GCI) begin as soon as possible and lasting for up to one year. At least to start with, the GEOSS Clearinghouses should be searchable by multiple Portals, and the GCI should be based on the use of open standards: these issues are to be addressed in more detail during the IOC, before any final decisions are made. A task force of experts, drawing on the expertise of the GEO Committees, GEO Members and Participating Organizations, would be established by the Secretariat to oversee the IOC, and a kick-off meeting of the IOC Task Force would be organized by the

Secretariat as soon as possible. The Committee requested the preparation of a more detailed reference document that would specify the reference frame for decisions taken at the end of the IOC, and requested the Secretariat to support the Task Force in preparing this document.

The Executive Committee restated the need to develop indicators of performance for GEOSS implementation and encouraged the Task Force to come up with a first proposal to be considered at GEO-V.

The Executive Committee acknowledged the work of the Task Team working on the GEO Guidelines on Data Sharing Principles. There was consensus that participation in the Task Team needs to be broadened and that a letter should be sent to GEO Principals requesting that their experts on the subject provide inputs and comments on the current set of Guidelines. The intention is to have the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles Implementation Guidelines ready for acceptance by the Ministerial Summit in 2010.

The Committee decided that GEO Committees in charge of overseeing Tasks should be responsible for making recommendations for closing any inactive one.

The Committee supported the proactive approach proposed by the Secretariat on the coordination of diverse forest monitoring activities of Members and Participating Organizations, in relation to carbon monitoring and other societal benefits.

The Executive Committee approved the process for elaborating the next GEO Work Plan.

The Committee accepted the schedule and the creation of a Target Task Team, including at least two members of the Executive Committee, to revise and update the six- and ten-year targets.

The Committee agreed that the Tsunami Working Group had successfully completed its mandate and therefore it did not need to be extended.

The Secretariat, with support from Germany, was tasked with drafting terms of reference for a possible advisory group of high-level experts that could be invited on a regular basis by the Executive Committee to discuss activities and provide external recommendations on GEO activities.

3 DECISIONS AND KEY ISSUES OF THE 13TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The GEO Co-Chair from the European Commission (EC) served as Chair for the meeting.

The Committee members decided to formally acknowledge and promote the G8 reference to GEOSS. They also agreed to pursue the possibility of arranging to have a report on GEO made to the G8 science ministers next year.

The Committee adopted the terms of reference for the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) Initial Operating Capability Task Force (IOCTF) and took note of its work plan. It recommended limiting the active lifespan of the IOCTF to a period of one year, starting 1 July 2008 and ending 30 June 2009. IOCTF members, however, will continue to advise and assist the Executive Committee in reporting on the outcome of the Initial Operating Capacity phase up to the GEO-VI Plenary in November 2009.

The Committee recognized that a target budget level for Secretariat Operations should be established at CHF 6 million, including in-kind contributions. It recommended that the Co-Chairs should write to GEO Members requesting additional contributions and highlighting the need for yearly contributions to the GEO Trust Fund to be established near CHF 4.5 million.

The Committee welcomed the results of the external audit of Financial Statements for 2007, which revealed no weaknesses or errors.

The Committee decided to establish an informal finance review for a trial period of 18 months. This review should be conducted by up to 5 members including at least one member from the Executive

Committee. The review should be open to all GEO Members and will be led by Australia and Switzerland.

The Executive Committee members applauded the successful transition of IGOS-P into GEO and accepted the proposition that a symposium around the former themes be organized at GEO-VI.

The Committee affirmed the approach taken in Version 1 of the 2009-2011 Work Plan.

The Committee welcomed the work of the Task Target Team (T3) but urged it to accelerate its pace, for example by holding an early break-out meeting; the T3 intends to submit an interim report to GEO-V and have the final results accepted by GEO-VI.

The Secretariat was asked to remind GEO Principals of the importance of the Data Sharing Principles implementation and to send out a letter extending the deadline for comments on the Principles.

The Committee mandated the Secretariat to work with the Task Team on performance indicators to ensure that a strong output would already be available for the GEO-V Plenary.

The Committee provided guidelines and asked the Secretariat to revise the draft document on performance indicators for the Secretariat and to present it to the next meeting of the Executive Committee so that it can be presented to GEO-V Plenary for acceptance.

The Committee also finalized and adopted the document setting out branding guidelines for GEO documents and components.

The Committee agreed that the Secretariat may sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and apply as an observer to two other United Nations bodies.

4 DECISIONS AND KEY ISSUES OF THE 14TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The GEO Co-Chair from South Africa served as Chair of the meeting.

Noting the importance of an early start to planning the 2010 GEO Ministerial Summit, the Committee asked the Secretariat to prepare a document for the next Executive Committee meeting outlining the planning process and expected priorities for the Summit.

The Committee noted the importance of strengthening the flow of information across the GEO community. It asked the Secretariat to publish an electronic bulletin on a regular basis highlighting key preparatory activities and events.

The Committee adopted the proposed Guidelines for Reporting on the Performance of the GEO Secretariat and Secretariat Director with minor editorial changes. The meeting agreed that the Guidelines would be reviewed in three years and could be amended then if necessary.

The meeting participants held an extensive discussion about a document submitted by the C4 Co-Chairs. They recognized that the document raises important strategic issues for the construction of GEOSS. They asked the C4 and the Committees to consult amongst their members more extensively and to submit their recommendations to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Committee accepted the proposed overall GEO schedule for 2009 and recommended that the September meetings of Committees be co-located.

The Committee reviewed the applications that have been received over the past year by eight organizations requesting to become GEO Participating Organizations: CUAHSI, DANTE, EUCENTRE, GLOBE, ICIMOD, IIASA, ITHACA, and UNECA. It agreed to recommend that the GEO-V Plenary accept the applications of DANTE, GLOBE, ICIMOD, IIASA and UNECA. It tasked the Secretariat with seeking additional information regarding the international dimension of CUAHSI.

Recognizing the continuing interest of organizations in joining GEO, the Committee agreed to ask the Plenary for a mandate to elaborate the expectations that GEO has of Participating Organizations.

The Committee considered three documents concerning the secretariat operations budget as well as an oral presentation on the informal finance review held on the previous day. It debated how best to ensure the Secretariat's short-term cash flows and the Trust Fund's long-term sustainability. The Committee asked Australia with the support of the Secretariat to explore the various ideas raised during the discussion and to present a paper at the Committee's next meeting.

The meeting reviewed the GEO-V agenda and documents and finalized the scenario for the Plenary meeting.

ANNEX E

GEO Secretariat Arrangements Procedures

Authority

1. GEO Rules of Procedure 3.2 (b, h) establish the authority of the Plenary to delegate tasks to the Executive Committee, including those pertaining to the supervision of the GEO Secretariat.
 - 3.2 **Duties:** Acting by consensus, the Executive Committee will:
 - b. Supervise the work of the Director of the Secretariat and ensure that it is consistent with the direction received by the Plenary;
 - h. Undertake such other tasks as may be delegated to the Executive Committee by the Plenary.
2. The Group on Earth Observations at its first session (Geneva, Switzerland 3-4 May 2005) created the Executive Committee and authorized the Executive Committee to recruit and select the Director and approve interim staff, including secondments. GEO also agreed that the WMO Secretary-General will appoint the Director as a WMO staff member.
3. The Third Plenary Meeting of the Group on Earth Observations (Bonn, Germany 28-29 November 2006) noted that the GEO Secretariat was to remain being filled by its Director and staff. GEO affirmed delegation of authority to the Executive Committee to ensure continuity of Secretariat operations and functioning.
4. The Standing Arrangement Between WMO and GEO states that the GEO Secretariat Director is selected by, and under the management authority, of GEO while under the administrative authority of the Secretary General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). It does not detail the process of recruitment, selection, renewal, or term of the Director. It does provide language affirming the applicability of WMO Staff and Financial Regulations.

Procedures

- The Director may serve a maximum of three three-year terms¹.
- In due time, the Executive Committee shall establish a selection panel (the Panel). The Panel shall be open to all members of the Executive Committee.

¹ Current WMO procedures limit positions below DG to a 2 year term and it is proposed to establish an exception for the GEOSEC Director position to support a smooth alignment with GEO Ministerial Summits.

- The Panel may recommend the Executive Committee to re-appoint the incumbent Director for a second term without further competition. The Executive Committee should approve such a recommendation through unanimous consent, no less than nine months before the end of a Director's term.
- If the Panel recommends opening the selection process to competition, then the Panel will oversee the announcement of the position, the review of the candidates, the interview process and the ultimate selection and recommendation to the Executive Committee.
- A Director who wishes to serve a third term shall take part in the open competition
- The decision of the Executive Committee on the selection process will be made no less than six months before the end of a Director's term and passed to the WMO Secretary General for formal appointment.
- In the event of the post of Director becoming vacant before the term expires, the Executive Committee will appoint an Acting Director, whose term of office shall not extend beyond the tenure of the incumbent Director.