



GROUP ON
EARTH OBSERVATIONS

GEO-VII

3-4 November 2010

Report of the Executive Committee

Document 18

As accepted at GEO-VII.

Report of the Executive Committee

1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the decisions taken at the 18th meeting of the Executive Committee, held in Geneva on 22-23 March 2010, the 19th meeting, held in Geneva on 15 – 16 July, and the 20th meeting, held in Beijing on 2 November, immediately prior to GEO-VII. The approved minutes of individual Executive Committee meetings can be found on the GEO website.

2 THE 18TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair from South Africa.

The Committee reviewed the Secretariat's Financial Report for 2009. It discussed at length how the level of contributions could be increased, noting that although the GEO membership had grown over the years, the number of contributors to the Trust Fund had remained stable. It noted the need to highlight the problem to the broader community, conduct more analysis, and establish a realistic budget. The GEO Co-Chairs agreed to sign a communiqué to GEO members on the importance of contributions to the Trust Fund.

The bulk of the meeting was dedicated to the preparations for the Beijing Ministerial Summit and the progress being made by the 2010 Ministerial Task Force. The Committee urged the Task Force to liaise with the Data Sharing Task Force to ensure effective communication with Ministers about the Beijing Ministerial in general and the data sharing principles in particular. It noted the importance of identifying single providers for the portal and clearinghouse by July to ensure that GEO has a fully operational GEOSS Common Infrastructure before the Ministerial. The Committee discussed the draft Ministerial agenda, the draft Declaration, political messages, the showcases, the Exhibition, and how to ensure that Ministers feel motivated to participate in the Summit.

The 2010 Ministerial Task Force received further guidance and, with the Secretariat, was requested to draft a second invitation letter and revise the declaration, agenda and Ministerial title for review by the GEO Co-Chairs before wider distribution. In addition, the Secretariat was asked to write to Principals who have not yet provided the name and contacts of a minister, develop a mailing list for use by China, draft an invitation letter to Participating Organization heads and distribute pricing and other logistical information about the Exhibition to the GEO community.

The Committee also discussed the Forest Carbon Tracking Task. It concluded by asking the Secretariat to issue a letter seeking the broader involvement of the GEO community in this important Task.

3 THE 19TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

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

The Committee discussed the Report on Income and Expenditure and the urgent need to increase the level of funding for the GEO Trust Fund. The United States announced a pledge of an additional USD

600,000. The Report from the External Auditor certified that the GEO accounts are correct; the Committee expressed its satisfaction with this finding.

The Co-Chair of the Evaluation Team presented the key findings and recommendations from the GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation, and the Committee systematically reviewed the eight recommendations. South Africa agreed to distribute to the Executive Committee an initial draft of a managerial response to the Evaluation and then, based on the comments received, to prepare a final text for submission to the GEO-VII Plenary.

The Co-Chair of the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group presented a revised 2010 timeline for preparing and executing the 2011 GEOSS Evaluation. The Committee supported the proposed timeline, although it did not agree with providing travel assistance for participation in the Evaluation Team.

The Committee discussed a proposal for establishing a new category of organizations within GEO. However, it was unable to reach consensus on this issue.

The Co-Chair of the Data Sharing Task Force presented the draft Data Sharing Action Plan. The Committee asked the Secretariat to circulate the draft Action Plan and supporting documents to GEO Principals for official government review. The Task Force, with the assistance of the Secretariat, was asked to revise the Action Plan based on the comments received and then to submit it to the GEO-VII Plenary for acceptance.

The Co-Chair of the 2010 Ministerial Task Force reported on progress on preparing the Beijing Ministerial. This included the forthcoming delivery by Chinese Minister Wan Gang of personal invitations to GEO Member government Ministers; the proposed Ministerial Summit theme of “Observe, Share, Inform,”; the distribution of the draft Ministerial Declaration to GEO Principals for comment through mid-August 2010; the final selection of six showcases on Capacity building, Asian regional activities, Disasters, Health, GEO BON, and Carbon; the offer by the European Commission to produce a “scene-setting” video for the Summit opening; the Exhibition; and the Report on Progress and other documents. The Committee provided further guidance on all of these issues. In particular, it urged that the draft Declaration text be strengthened.

After a lengthy discussion on the GEO-VII Plenary, a number of amendments were proposed to the Draft GEO-VII Agenda, including allocating more time for discussion of the Beijing Declaration. It was agreed that this would now go forward as the Draft Agenda for the GEO-VII plenary.

The Chair of the GCI Coordination Team (GCI-CT), presented the findings and recommendations of the Team on the process for selecting single providers for the GEO Web Portal and the GEOSS Clearinghouse. The selection process has been set in motion in February 2010 upon the request of the GEO-VI Plenary, and the GCI Coordination Team had been tasked to provide the results by May 2010. Based upon its work, the Coordination Team recommended that the US Geological Survey (USGS) be accepted as the GEOSS Common Infrastructure Clearinghouse Component Provider and that the European Space Agency (ESA) / UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) be accepted as the GEOSS Common Infrastructure GEO Web Portal Component Provider. The Executive Committee endorsed this recommendation.

The Secretariat reported on the GEO 2009-2011 Work Plan, the Work Plan Symposium held in Pretoria in May, and the preparations for the 2012-2015 Work Plan. The Committee asked it to develop a prototype report that would assess progress in the Work Plan tasks as measured against the Strategic Targets.

The European Commission presented a document on the process for selecting the Secretariat Director for the period 2012 – 2014.

Following a brief discussion the US, with Brazil, the EC, Italy, South Africa and the GEO Secretariat volunteered to draft a new document “Engaging the Private sector in GEOSS”, to be finalized at a future meeting of the Committee.

4 THE 20TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair from China and was held in Beijing immediately before the GEO-VII Plenary meeting. It focused on the preparations for GEO-VII and the Ministerial Summit.

The meeting discussed the Secretariat's budget and financial reports and commended the Secretariat Operations Report.

The Co-Chair of the 2010 Ministerial Task Force described the agenda and scenario for the Ministerial. A number of short videos describing GEO "showcases" will be presented during the course of the day. The first showcase video, on capacity building, will be screened the evening before at the Ministerial dinner. The Summit itself will open with a short "curtainraiser" video. This will be followed by showcase videos on the Asian region during session 1, health services at the start of session 2, GEO BON at the start of session 3, and carbon monitoring at the start of session 4. The showcase videos will be posted in a downloadable format on the GEO web site after the conference. In addition two information documents, the Report on Progress (Document MS2) and Crafting Geoinformation, will be available.

The meeting Chair stated his intention to establish an open-ended group to discuss the draft Declaration (document MS1) during the Plenary. He requested David Grimes of Canada, together with a representative of China's Ministry of Science and Technology to facilitate the group's discussions. Participation in the group will be open to both Members and Participating Organizations. To date China has received only several comments on the draft text.

The Executive Committee also reviewed the GEO-VII documents. It finalized the Report of the Executive Committee to Plenary (Document 18) and the GEOSS Data Sharing Action Plan (Document 7), and it agreed on how to present to Plenary Document 3 on the Recognition of Participating Organizations. It also proposed, with the agreement of Plenary, to prepare a discussion document for GEO-VIII on a long-term strategy for assuring the sustainability of GEOSS beyond 2015; this would then lead to the drafting of a report to be submitted to Ministers in 2013.

Annex B

Performance of the Secretariat and Secretariat Director

Duties, Documents and Assessment

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
a) Prepare and submit, for Plenary approval, the Annual Work Plan - including activities and budgets;	3-Year Work Plan Update (Plenary document)	Technical and official reviews conducted over the year. Work Plan Symposium held in June. Update document submitted to Plenary	The Executive Committee concurs with the GEO Secretariat's Assessment.
b) Support the implementation by Members and Participating Organizations of the Annual Work Plan and execute expenditure of the budget;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Fulfilled. Budget remained balanced on each year since GEO was established	The Executive Committee concurs with the GEO Secretariat's Assessment.
c) Provide annual reports on the performance of GEOSS, including milestones of the Annual Work Plan;	Work Plan Progress Report (Plenary document) Monitoring and Evaluation Report (Plenary document)	Task Sheet update coordinated by GEO Secretariat. Three reports prepared for Executive Committee meetings and one major, illustrated, for GEO-VII	The Executive Committee concurs with the GEO Secretariat's Assessment.
d) Provide annual reports on Secretariat operations, including execution of annual budget expenditures;	a) Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document) b) Financial statement and Report on income and expenditure (Plenary documents)	Secretariat operations and financial statements submitted to all Executive Committee meetings. Budget audited successfully every year. A working capital of CHF 2 million was created in 2005/2006 and has been maintained over the years.	The Executive Committee is grateful to the GEO Secretariat Director and Staff for their efforts to reduce the expenditure in line with the contributions to the GEO Trust Fund.
e) Organize, prepare, and support meetings and other	Committees report to the Executive Committee	Three Executive Committee, multiple	Committee representatives and

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
work of the GEO Plenary, Executive Committee, and other GEO committees and working groups;	and to Plenary.	teleconferences of Committees and Co-Chairs, Committee meetings, Work Plan Symposium and co-located Committee meetings in South Africa, Plenary	Members of the Executive Committee expressed thanks for the support of their activities from the Secretariat, but noted that the Secretariat has not asked them for a formal assessment.
f) Pursue activities to identify and secure funds for Secretariat operations and GEO activities in accordance with the direction of GEO;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Increased the contribution of Members though the development of selected Tasks and activities (Forest Carbon, Water, Disasters...) Contributions have been increasing regularly over the past 3 years.	The Executive Committee notes that there still remains a need to actively encourage Members to contribute to the GEO Trust Fund to increase the support of the core functions of the Secretariat.
g) Oversee the implementation of the GEO communication;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Website newsletter have been designed and produced. Brochures and documents have been designed and prepared for Plenary meetings and Summit	The Executive Committee notes that the 2009 request, "that a communication strategy be provided as the basis for this work in future years" has not been fulfilled.
h) Organize the GEOSS user and other fora as required in coordination with GEO Committees as appropriate;	Assessments from GEO Committees on the support provided by the Secretariat. (Annex)	Increasing number of Communities of Practice were established and coordinated. Support to usability testing of the GEO Portal was ensured.	The Executive Committee notes that no formal assessment has been presented.
i) Facilitate overall cooperation and liaise with GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and other programmes and	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Fulfilled. Numerous examples in mentioned reports	The Executive Committee concurs with the GEO Secretariat's Assessment.

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
bodies as appropriate or as needed to support the work of GEO, with particular emphasis on existing systems and Earth observation coordination mechanisms;			
j) Identify staffing and other resources necessary to support the Annual Work Plan, develop indicators for Secretariat performance, and report to Plenary on Secretariat performance against indicators;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Fulfilled in all reports. Secretariat remaining properly staffed at all times	Regarding performance indicators, the Executive Committee believes that more robust indicators will need to be developed in the longer term, moving from activity-based to impact-reporting and maintains an outstanding action to that effect on its Action List.
k) Ensure an open and transparent process is utilized for all Secretariat employees, including short-term contractors, and for the designation of experts to the various GEO committees and working groups;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document). GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan Development Process & Schedule (GEO-VII Plenary doc.18)	All positions are advertised on the GEO website and notified to the GEO Leadership. GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan Development Process & Schedule document submitted to GEO-VII.	The Executive Committee concurs with the GEO Secretariat's Assessment.
l) Facilitate and coordinate the updating of the 10-Year Implementation Plan as directed by the Plenary;		Strategic Target document submitted to GEO-VI	The Executive Committee concurs with the GEO Secretariat's Assessment

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
m) Conduct the day-to-day administrative activities of the Secretariat;	a) Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document) b) Reports from missions undertaken by members of the GEO Secretariat (Available upon request)	Fulfilled. Administrative functioning as always remained efficient and effective.	The Executive Committee concurs with the GEO Secretariat's Assessment
n) Carry out additional duties as required by GEO.	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Fulfilled	