



**Tenth Plenary session of GEO
15-16 January 2014, Geneva, Switzerland**

**Statement made by DIVERSITAS (Dr Anne-Hélène Prieur-Richard, Acting Executive Director), a
Participating Organisation of GEO related to Agenda item 6**

Thank you Madam co-Chair.

DIVERSITAS, the international programme for biodiversity science of ICSU, the International Council for Science, and UNESCO, has been co-leading the development of the biodiversity component of GEOSS, better known as the GEO Biodiversity Observation Network, or GEO BON for short. DIVERSITAS has done this together with US NASA, the Global Biodiversity Information Facility, the World Conservation Monitoring Center of UNEP, IUCN, and with the participation of many other organisations and countries worldwide.

Today, we are happy to briefly mention progress made by GEO BON in the development, during the past year, of a series of products to be delivered in 2015. I would like to particularly mention the success of GEO BON in enhancing national engagement in its activities, in particular through two events:

- 1) The joint GEO BON and UN Convention on Biological Diversity expert workshop organised in October 2013 in Montreal, Canada. This event led to recommendations from SBSTTA17 on GEO BON support to CBD Member countries to monitor progress toward the 2020 Biodiversity Targets.
- 2) The Biodiversity special event organised by Switzerland the day before yesterday, aiming at further engaging GEO Members and Participating Organisations in GEO BON activities.

I, on behalf of the GEO BON community, would like to convey our great appreciation and thanks to Switzerland for - not only hosting this GEO Plenary - but also having taken the lead in organising this special biodiversity event; and I would like to expand on the statement made by Switzerland yesterday during the GEO Vision discussion. The meeting participants, and the GEO BON community, see the following three priorities for the 2014-2015 period as essential in the achieving the GEOSS implementation plan.

- 1) Further development and refinement of the Essential Biodiversity Variables, also called EBVs, which will provide guidance to the observation system and help countries respond to their international biodiversity reporting commitments.

- 2) Development of what we call “BON in a Box”, a set of tools and best practices to help build national and regional integrated and interoperable biodiversity observing systems.
- 3) Support to the development of national and regional capabilities in the field of biodiversity and ecosystem services observation.

These priorities are key to respond to the needs of the GEO BON user community, especially the new assessment mechanism for biodiversity and ecosystem services, IPBES, which approved its first programme of work, for 2014-2018, last December.

Fulfilling these priorities is possible due to the great expertise of the GEO BON community and member organisations. The GEO BON community thus happily offers this expertise to the whole GEO community, wherever biodiversity plays a significant role, such as agriculture, water, and health.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Germany for its offer to host the GEO BON secretariat over the next 3 years, at the Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research - iDiv. Finally, we would like to announce that yesterday a new leadership for GEO BON took office, with Prof Henrique Pereira from iDiv as Chair, and Dr Mike Gill from Environment Canada as vice-Chair. We thank the outgoing Chair Dr Robert Scholes from CSIR for his work, and South Africa for hosting the GEO BON secretariat over the last three and a half years.

In conclusion, **DIVERSITAS and the entire GEO BON community call upon GEO Members and organisations to invest in achieving the above priorities, especially through building national BON,** that we see as key for the future of biodiversity, ecosystem services, and other relevant societal areas.

I thank you for your attention.