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AfriGEOSS Implementation Plan

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For consultation.

AfriGEOSS Implementation Plan

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1 FOREWORD

The main purpose of this document is to provide an update on the progress in the implementation approach for AfriGEOSS and on the planned way forward to make it one of the key initiatives for the next decade of GEO, to 2025.

The AfriGEOSS Working Group, represented by ten African countries (Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and South Africa) and three Africa-based Participating Organisations (AARSE, RCMRD and UNECA), with contributions from non-GEO Members, developed this top-level Implementation Plan for AfriGEOSS. The plan addresses the coordination framework from the national to global level, key focus areas of activities, and the governance structure, including the composition and definition of Terms of Reference of the Steering Committee, national focal points and the Coordination Team.

2 INTRODUCTION

GEO is a voluntary partnership of 94 governments and 77 international, Participating Organizations (POs) aimed at coordinating efforts to build a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). GEO was launched in response to calls for action by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and by the G8 leading industrialized countries. The GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan focuses on nine Societal Benefit Areas: agriculture, biodiversity, climate, disasters, ecosystems, energy, health, water and weather. In addition to these nine areas, GEO has made major strides in developing and implementing Data Sharing Principles which call for open access to publicly funded data at, preferably, no cost, or the cost of reproduction.

For nearly a decade, a number of GEO programmes, initiatives and projects have focussed on or included Africa in their scope. These activities included responding to societal benefit requirements and accessing Earth observation (EO) data, such as free and open access to Landsat, CBERS and, now, SPOT and Sentinel datasets. These GEO initiatives need to support the continuously growing African Earth observation community, which is establishing its presence in the region and in the global arena, benefitting from national and regional programs, as well as from on-going cooperation initiatives with a great number of external Partners. The development and uptake of Earth observations data and information to improve the socio-economic status of the African continent is a prominent and fast-growing part of these activities.

The GEO Africa membership (made up of 24 Member States and five Africa-based Participating Organisations, Annex A) have recognized in the implementation of GEOSS, the opportunity to consolidate the above process. The concept of the AfriGEOSS initiative was fully endorsed by the GEO-IX Plenary in November 2012, with several GEO Members and POs expressing their willingness to provide contributions. The background of the initiative and its conceptual approach was described in Document 10 [“AfriGEOSS: An Initiative to Build GEOSS in Africa”](#), presented at GEO-IX.

The official launch of the AfriGEOSS initiative took place on 5 November 2013 during the joint Africa GIS 2013 and GSDI 2014 Global Geospatial Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The AfriGEOSS initiative, developed within the GEO framework, will strengthen the link between current GEO activities and existing capabilities and initiatives in Africa. It will provide the necessary framework for countries and organizations to access and leverage on-going national and international bilateral and multilateral EO-based initiatives across Africa, thereby creating synergies and minimizing duplication for the benefit of the entire continent.

3 VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

AfriGEOSS is a coordinated GEO initiative to enhance Africa’s capacity to produce, manage and use Earth observations, while enabling the Region’s participation in, and contribution to, GEOSS.

3.1 Vision

The AfriGEOSS vision is for a continent where decisions on policy and implementation programs, involving the production, management and use of Earth observations, are taken with the involvement of all stakeholders through a coordination framework that enables country-to-region-to-continent linkages.

3.2 Goal

AfriGEOSS aims to provide a coordination framework for all Earth observation activities in Africa. The mechanism will allow for coordination amongst various programmes, projects and activities across the continent to reduce duplication of effort and address gaps in data and capabilities. This will be achieved through establishing national-based coordination mechanisms that will in turn feed into regional coordination mechanisms.

3.3 Objectives

To achieve the above, a set of overall objectives has been defined for AfriGEOSS:

- Coordinate and bring together relevant stakeholders, institutions and agencies across Africa that are involved in GEO and other Earth observation activities;
- Provide a platform for countries to participate in GEO and to contribute to GEOSS;
- Assist in knowledge sharing and global collaboration;
- Identify challenges, gaps and opportunities for African contributions to GEO and GEOSS;
- Leverage existing capacities and planned assets and resources;
- Develop an appropriate strategy and participatory model for achieving the above goals; and
- Develop a strategy of communicating Earth observation data throughout Africa.

AfriGEOSS aims to support Africa in achieving open and affordable access to EO data, operational use of EO data in daily pursuits of national mandates and for evidence based decision making; collaboration on systems development and ICT infrastructure establishment around EO; skills, capacity and competencies to exploit fully the advantages of EO and Africa 's involvement in GEO and other international initiatives.

4 OPERATIONAL APPROACH

The AfriGEOSS implementation approach will be two-fold: “bottom-up” by coordinating national activities and expanding their reach through regional and continental level mechanisms; and “top-down” by tailoring GEO global initiatives to address Africa’s needs.

The following lines of action will be followed to achieve the identified approach:

- Re-establish strong contacts with the current GEO Principals and enlarge the GEO partnership in Africa. Expanding these relationships will ensure support from decision makers for national activities and global contributions;
- Address both the infrastructure and the services/application components, based on the development of regional networks that form the backbone of a continental network and, in parallel, define options for a coordination framework at the regional level;
- Develop an extensive inventory of current and planned initiatives and available resources. The audit of what is happening in Africa will contribute to a map of on-going activities related to

the AfriGEOSS objectives and assist in managing overlaps, identifying gaps and opportunities, as well as leveraging resources to meet objectives;

- Link existing initiatives, not yet connected to GEO, to the GEO Work Plan, clearly indicating contributions to GEOSS;
- Influence upcoming initiatives to ensure that Africa receives full benefit from, and makes a contribution to, GEO global initiatives;
- Engage African communities, on a continuous basis, using the existing networks and through specific measures such as development of an AfriGEOSS website, exhibitions, side events and a periodic GEOSS in Africa conference; and
- Periodically assess progress towards the objectives.

4.1 Initial Recognitions

In addition to the endorsement by GEO Plenary, AfriGEOSS has subsequently received recognition from regional, continental and bilateral formal structures, such as:

- Africa and European delegation at the GMES and Africa Validation Workshop declaration, Johannesburg, October 2013 (*GMES & Africa Validation Workshop Declaration*) ... “*AfriGEOSS is Africa’s contribution to GEO*”;
- African Heads of State and the European Union at the Africa-European Union Strategic Partnership, 4th EU-Africa Summit, Brussels, April 2014 (*Africa-European Union 2014 – 2017 Roadmap*), “...*development of Earth Observation activities in Africa so that space strategically contributes to Africa’s socio-economic development.... in order to deliver services in priority domains for Africa ...*”;
- At the margins of the 4th EU-Africa Summit of Heads of State and Governments, Brussels, April 2014, Cooperative Arrangement of on GMES and Africa was signed by the European Commission and African Union Commission ...”*Welcomed the outcome of the October 2013 GMES and Africa Validation/Consolidation Workshop in South Africa and Stress that the implementation of this outcome should build on and be in line with Earth Observation initiatives such as AMESD, MESA, TIGER and AfriGEOSS, should enhance collaboration and should strongly address issues such as policy, human, institutional and technical capacity building, infrastructure, governance, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation...*”;
- The Joint Meeting of SADC Ministers of Science, Innovation & Technology and Education & Training, Maputo, Mozambique, 16 – 20 June 2014, Ministers:
 - *Approved the initiation of the partnership between the SADC Secretariat and the GEO Secretariat;*
 - *Agreed to support Africa's contribution to GEO under AfriGEOSS;*
 - *Directed the SADC Secretariat to provide member states with all required information to consider membership to the GEO and to submit a status report at the next meeting in 2015.*
- The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) at its 66th Executive Council, Geneva, June 2014, recognised the value of AfriGEOSS and encouraged engagement with National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NHMSs) to effectively meet government and societal needs. It further stated in its WIGOS document, “*The Council reiterated that collaboration and coordination with partners, including AfriGEOSS, the European Commission and many other non-WMO, non-NMHS communities, is a priority for WIGOS and will need additional attention in order to build synergy and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.*”

5 AREAS OF ACTIVITY

5.1 Introduction

The work needed to meet the AfriGEOSS objectives has been organized into the six major areas identified below. The definition of these areas is driven both by the specific needs of the initiative (mainly points 5.2, 5.6 and 5.7 below), and by the need to ensure that the initiative will connect effectively to overall GEO activities and relevant processes (as defined in Sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5).

For each of the Areas of Activity, the Plan describes the nature of the activities and the major achievements planned for the phases to come (Definition, Implementation and Initial Operations). Detailed Work Plans will be developed once the Implementation Plan is endorsed by GEO-XI Plenary in November 2014.

It is important to note that the proposed structure of the activities:

- complies with the current definition of GEO Work Plan tasks and task components;
- ensures a basic level of coordination; and
- allows a progressive increase in the number of activities and their scope as soon as additional resources become available.

5.2 Continental and Regional Coordination

This is the essential component for the implementation of AfriGEOSS. The coordination will take place along different axes:

- a. Inside the continent, from national to regional to continental, through the development of regional networks that will form the backbone of a continental network and, in parallel, define options for a coordination framework at the regional level;
- b. African contributions to global initiatives (GEO/GEOSS, UN framework conventions, etc.);
- c. African benefits from African-scale global initiatives (such as the GEO global initiatives);
- d. Priorities and activities to address the infrastructure, services/applications and capacity building needs as identified through extensive regional inventories and roadmaps.

Results from these activities, and a clearer picture of African needs and priorities, will constitute the input for the main AfriGEOSS components, (from 5.3 to 5.7) which, through periodic revisions, will provide the basis for coordinating the on-going activities and influencing upcoming initiatives.

5.3 User Needs and Applications

Meeting user needs and coordinating the development and demonstration of related applications, is the ultimate objective of GEO and, by definition, AfriGEOSS. They cover a number of thematic areas, corresponding to the nine Societal Benefit Areas of GEO and beyond.

A key, recurring activity will be a periodic review of user needs on the basis of the inputs provided by the coordination network. The results of these assessments will strongly influence the actions to be taken in other areas.

The second line of activity will be progressive inclusion of specific projects into the AfriGEOSS framework by creating relationships with on-going initiatives and by bringing together new actors to define and implement new activities.

User needs analyses at different levels, and the content and plans of the GEO global initiatives, will constitute the starting point to progressively address the different application areas of priority.

The continent has a number of activities that have already identified major thematic areas, such as disaster management (especially floods and fires), food security and water resource management that will readily connect with GEO activities.

In addition, GEO currently has five global initiatives (Blue Planet, GEO Biodiversity Observation Network (GEOBON), GEO Global Agriculture Monitoring (GEOGLAM), Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI), and Global Land Cover), to which AfriGEOSS has started developing linkages.

5.4 Data and Infrastructure

This activity area complements the ability of the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) to provide end users with access to data, information, products and services.

5.4.1 Coordinated Earth observation satellite data over Africa

The ability to downlink satellite data directly for processing will strongly support the development of timely downstream applications, products and services. This will substantially expand access to, and the use and application of, Earth observation data for policy- and decision-making. Such services will provide significant societal benefits, particularly in the areas of disasters (fires, floods), disease outbreaks and natural resources management. Several ground stations already exist, but because they are not interoperable their full potential for supporting research, applications and human capital development has not been realised. To remedy this situation, AfriGEOSS can provide a coordination mechanism to promote interoperability involving interfaces, common file formats, common dissemination standards, etc.

This component is expected to be made up of the countries and space agencies in charge of the ground stations in Africa, including Algeria (ASAL), Egypt (NARSS), Gabon (AGEOS), Nigeria (NARSDA), South Africa (SANSA), Malindi (Italy) station in Kenya and SEAS (IRD) on Reunion Island.

This component can be further developed by incorporating:

- A summary of African capabilities;
- Satellite missions being considered;
- Areas of intervention and related objectives;
 - Satellite data acquisition networks;
 - Data mining in existing archives;
 - Data processing;
 - Data archiving;
 - Data dissemination and delivery, including understanding connectivity status and plans in Africa.

The progressive implementation of the GEOSS Data Sharing principles is creating the proper conditions for the definition and subsequent successful implementation of a number of coordinated initiatives that have the objective of building an historical archive of satellite data over Africa and of ensuring sustained access to ongoing missions data. This particular initiative builds on the opening of the SPOT archives (from SPOT 1 to SPOT 5) for free access to data (at least five years old and with resolutions greater than 10 meters), which has been granted by France. The objective of the initiative is to progressively develop regional historical archives of SPOT data together with a number of simple but robust “test cases” on the use of these data in informing decisions in different societal areas. Under the Data & Infrastructure Activity, AfriGEOSS aims to develop this initiative to cover other open access satellite data archives.

The provision of education and training programmes focusing on the development of open-source software and open systems, and the development of acquisition and dissemination mechanisms, need to take into consideration the challenges of limited bandwidth in many developing countries. To accurately identify the scope of data and infrastructure capabilities and needs, this component needs to include engagement with other non-Earth observation entities, such as The East African Submarine System (EASSy) programme and the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa (ICA), to ensure that issues of connectivity across the continent are addressed in support of Earth observations data dissemination.

5.4.2 Coordinated *in-situ* observations network for Africa

GEOSS is not only concerned with satellite observations but also *in-situ* observations. There is a need to bring attention to this element with regard to data acquisition activities in Africa. Further, though the GEO data sharing principles have had major successes in opening access to satellite observations, the same cannot be said for *in-situ* observation data and information for Africa.

Africa, unlike Europe, for example, does not have an institution responsible for coordinating access to *in-situ* measurements. This is something for which Africa can aspire. This sub-component will bring *in-situ* data custodians and providers into the GEO community and promote open access to *in-situ* measurements and information.

5.5 Human Capital Development

Collaboration on establishing and/or strengthening regional capacity-building networks has already taken place through the GEO Institutions and Development Board (IDB) and the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) Working Group on Capacity Building and Data Democracy.

The current GEO POs in Africa: the African Association of Remote Sensing of the Environment (AARSE), and the Environmental Information System (EIS-Africa), African Centre of Meteorological Information for Development (ACMAD, Niger), the Regional Centre for Monitoring of Resources for Development (RCMRD, Kenya) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), each with extensive experience in geospatial activities, will contribute to this component by using their programmes and networks to ensure that effective and well-coordinated education and training activities are established. They will also support the creation of networks amongst other relevant agencies, such as the United Nations and other national and regional training centers.

Further, this component is expected to align its activities to support the, yet to be established, Pan African University (PAU) for Space Science and the potential role it can play in addressing human capacity constraints on the continent. PAU, to be hosted by Southern Africa Region, will establish nodes across the continent. The AfriGEOSS community must be proactive in identifying and supporting the inclusion of Earth observation components within each node.

5.6 Resource Contributors Coordination

This component will look at a coordination mechanism for resource contributors to African initiatives.

The resource contributors range from entities such as the European Commission, international development agencies, international development banks, research institutions and governments. This component aims to bring together and engage with all the main actors having Africa-focused support programs and plans in the AfriGEOSS priority areas of acquisition, processing and use of Earth observations.

5.7 Communication and Outreach

Raising awareness and outreach to African communities on a continuous basis, using the existing networks and through specific measures such as development of an AfriGEOSS website, exhibitions, side events and a periodic GEOSS in Africa conference, are key elements of the communication and outreach strategy.

AfriGEOSS will organize dedicated events to promote and leverage other type of events to promote AfriGEOSS, GEO and GEOSS such as those organized by AARSE and EIS Africa through its AfricaGIS conference and other forums. The focus will be on encouraging African countries to become GEO Members and to actively participate in GEO tasks.

6 THE COORDINATION FRAMEWORK

6.1 Introduction

Building a proper and sustained coordination framework is essential to ensure that AfriGEOSS' objectives will be met.

Once in place, this framework will enable coordination inside the continent, allow the definition and implementation of coordinated African contributions to global initiatives, and ensure greater benefits for Africa from initiatives at the global scale.

The coordination framework needs to address geographical representation, political representation and functional areas.

The proposed AfriGEOSS coordination framework is comprised of two different but cooperating components:

1. A standing Coordination Network of national and regional focal points, ensuring systematic geographical representation;
2. A dedicated coordination structure, referred to as the AfriGEOSS Management Arrangement, which, in this initial phase, constitutes the continental coordination layer and covers the political representation and functional areas.

The GEO Africa Caucus will ensure oversight of the development and implementation of the AfriGEOSS coordination framework.

6.2 The Coordination Network of national and regional focal points

The main function of this network is to ensure continuous, two-way communication from national to regional to continental levels, and vice versa.

The network will be used to circulate very different types of communications, such as general information of potential interest to the different countries/organizations (e.g., newsletters), progress reports on AfriGEOSS coordinated initiatives, and definition and consolidation of new initiatives and projects. More specifically, the Coordination Network will serve to:

- a) Engage all stakeholders at the national level;
- b) Provide linkages between AfriGEOSS coordinated activities and national activities;
- c) Provide national contacts as may be required by the AfriGEOSS Management; and
- d) Undertake communication and outreach activities at the national level, such as dissemination of information.

The components of the Coordination Network include the following:

- a) National Coordinators (NCs), appointed by the GEO Principals where the country is a GEO Member, or through an exchange of letters between the GEO Secretariat and the interested institution;

- b) Regional Coordinators (RCs), based on partnerships with Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and other regional representative structures where applicable (for example, the regional coordination mechanism may appoint a RC from the NCs); and
- c) Continental Coordination, constituted by the AfriGEOSS Management in this initial phase of AfriGEOSS Implementation. In the medium term, this is envisaged to be accomplished through continental institutions, such as the African Union Commission, or UNECA, once dedicated internal structures have been established in those organizations (e.g., the space secretariat within AUC).

It is important to underscore that the identified focal points will have the responsibility of ensuring involvement of all national institutions interested and/or involved in the use of EO for decision making, thus building a permanent national coordination.

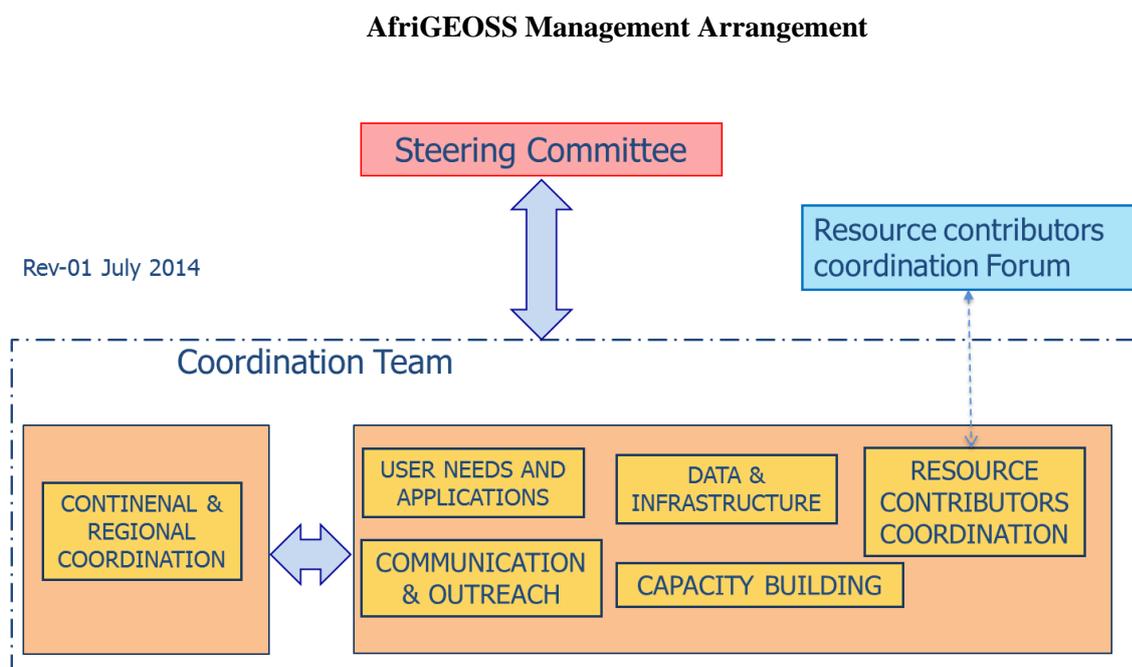
The network will be progressively built by incorporating representatives from countries and organizations ready and willing to join, keeping in mind the need to have balanced geographical coverage of the continent.

6.3 AfriGEOSS Management Arrangement

The main function of the AfriGEOSS Management Arrangement will be to coordinate the execution of the agreed activities in each of the areas of intervention, and to ensure the achievement of the agreed objectives.

The proposed AfriGEOSS Management Arrangement is summarized in the following diagram and includes:

- Steering Committee;
- Coordination Team;
- Resource Contributors Coordination Forum.



6.3.1 *AfriGEOSS Steering Committee*

The Steering Committee will provide guidance for AfriGEOSS Implementation on key issues, such as objectives, policy decisions, priority actions and resource allocation. It meets normally once a year or when needed and operates by consensus.

The composition of the Steering Committee includes 11 members, as follows:

- a) Six seats for GEO member countries representing the six African regions;
- b) One seat for the African Union Commission (HRST) Human Resources, Science and Technology);
- c) One seat for UNECA;
- d) Two seats for GEO Participating Organizations based in Africa;
- e) One seat for the Director of the GEO Secretariat.

At its first meeting, the Committee will designate two Co-Chairs, each with a one-year mandate.

The African Caucus will be responsible for appointing members for positions a) and d) on a one-year rotation basis.

6.3.2 *AfriGEOSS Coordination Team*

The Coordination Team will be responsible for the overall coordination of AfriGEOSS activities. In particular, it will ensure: 1) technical coordination; 2) securing of resources; 3) reporting; 4) institutional linkages; and 5) planning.

The Coordination Team reports to the Steering Committee for overall guidance and, working through the GEO Secretariat, is responsible for preparing and presenting annual reports to the GEO Plenary and to the GEO Executive Committee, as required.

The Coordination Team structure fully reflects the areas of AfriGEOSS activities and is comprised of the Team Coordinator, plus the leaders of the five areas of activities. – The Team Coordinator is responsible for the sixth area, continental and regional coordination. In the initial phase of AfriGEOSS implementation, the Coordination Team is led by the GEO Secretariat expert, the “Team Coordinator” specifically seconded by South Africa for this purpose.

The Team coordinator is hosted at the GEO Secretariat, which will also provide administrative support to the Team, and will ensure a technical and planning interface to the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI). The remaining five area leaders may perform the agreed activities from their home location, with the understanding that they will devote to this duty a substantial amount of their time. The first step, through a call for contributions to GEO African Members and POs, would be to identify and ensure availability of the five leaders, one for each area of activity.

The Coordination Network will be developed over time based on available resources. As soon as specific projects or initiatives are consolidated under each activity area, a dedicated “coordination arrangement” will be put in place.

6.3.3 *Resource Contributors Coordination Forum*

The Resource Contributors Coordination Forum will bring together, once a year, all the main actors having Africa-focused support programs and plans in the AfriGEOSS priority areas of acquisition, processing and use of Earth observations.

The forum’s main objectives are the definition of coordinated support plans at the regional and continental level, the identification of direct contributions to the AfriGEOSS initiative, and review of the results of the coordinated actions.

7 RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Dedicated resources will be needed to achieve the objectives of developing the AfriGEOSS coordination framework and reaching, under GEO, its initial operational capabilities. These resources may be contributed in the form of cash contributions, allocation of dedicated personnel, and/or support of specific activities. These resources are expected to be a small fraction of the overall resources that are committed by a great number of resource contributors, to actually develop projects on the African continent.

The resources will be used to ensure the governance of the AfriGEOSS initiative and the execution of the agreed activities for the five AfriGEOSS components. These needs include, but are not limited to:

- Team member participation costs and related expenses (including travel);
- Support for meetings, workshops and symposia;
- Support for participation of African countries and organization representatives at meetings, workshops and symposia;
- Undertaking specific studies or activities;
- Producing outreach material and events;
- Implementing communication actions and materials.

As with similar GEO initiatives, such as GFOI and GEOGLAM, it is proposed that a specific budget line in the GEO Trust Fund be used to manage the cash contributions received from donors.

8 PHASING, DELIVERABLES AND PLANNING

The described process began in 2012 and is expected to last through 2025 through the following phases:

Phase	Years	Main Deliverables
Concept Phase (completed)	2012-2013	AfriGEOSS Concept (Documents to GEO-IX and GEO-X).
Definition Phase	2014	AfriGEOSS Implementation Plan; Initial elements of the coordination framework in place.
Implementation Phase	2015-2025	Progressive establishment of the AfriGEOSS coordination framework, through national, regional and continental mechanisms; Progressive increase of the contributions to the Activity Areas; Progressive increase of coordination for decisions and initiatives at national, regional and continental level; Periodic adjustment of AfriGEOSS Management Arrangements.

ANNEX A

As of August 2014, the GEO membership included 94 countries plus the European Commission. The 24 Members from Africa are:

Algeria	Madagascar
Burkina Faso	Mali
Cameroon	Mauritius
Central Africa Republic	Morocco
Congo, Republic of the	Niger
Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)	Nigeria
Egypt	Senegal
Ethiopia	Seychelles, Republic of
Gabon	South Africa
Ghana	Sudan
Guinea-Bissau	Tunisia
Guinea, Republic of	Uganda

Five of GEO's 77 Participating Organisations are based in Africa:

- African Association of Remote Sensing for the Environment (AARSE);
- African Centre for Climate Monitoring and Applications Development (ACMAD);
- Environmental Information System (EIS-Africa);
- Regional Centre for Monitoring and Remote Sensing Development (RCMRD); and
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA).