



GROUP ON
EARTH OBSERVATIONS

GEO-XI

13-14 November 2014

2014 Report of the Executive Committee

Document 14

As approved at GEO-XI.

2014 Report of the Executive Committee

1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the key actions and decisions taken at the 31st meeting held in Geneva 8-9 July and the 32nd meeting, also held in Geneva, 11-12 November 2014. The approved minutes of individual Executive Committee meetings can be found on the GEO [website](#).

2 THE 31ST MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The meeting was chaired by Rudolf Strohmeier, the GEO Co-Chair representing the European Commission.

- The Chair explained that the late change of the agenda, presented as a revision, is proposed to accommodate Agenda Item 4 - Development of the new GEOSS Implementation Plan - to facilitate the participation of the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) co-facilitator, Danielle Lacasse, via video link from Canada;
- The Chair agreed to Australia's proposal, seconded by Gabon, to consider Agenda Item 6 - Principles of Governance and Oversight between Executive Committee and Secretariat (Document 10) - before Agenda Item 5 - Selection of the GEO Secretariat Director;
- The Draft Report of the 30th Executive Committee was accepted, with proposed changes to page 9 (item 31.13) correction of spelling; page 16, correction of address; and page 19, confirming the correct country name of "Korea, Republic of";
- The Chair noted that Action Items from the previous Executive Committee meeting would be closed pending satisfactory discussion of documents related to the Action Items; and
- The Executive Committee noted that the 2013 Draft Report of the Executive Committee had been circulated to the Members on 14 February, no comments were received and, therefore, the Report was posted on the GEO Website as a final document.

The Executive Committee considered the **Draft Engagement Strategy Roadmap** presented by the Secretariat. The Engagement strategy was presented in three sections: Communications, Private Sector Engagement and Resource Mobilization. The document built on the previous documents for the GEO-X Plenary, and guidance received at Plenary and the Geneva Ministerial Summit. The Executive Committee felt that there was a need to strongly refine the key messages and intended audiences of the strategy. There was a concern that the Private Sector section required more definition and a more detailed roadmap on how to engage private companies, with an emphasis on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), as agreed at GEO-IX. The Executive Committee agreed that specific efforts to engage with the UN and other relevant International Organisations, particularly in reference to supporting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was a priority for the Engagement Strategy. The Executive Committee discussed initiating and/or strengthening efforts being made within the Caucuses, either in regard to engaging in, or co-organising, international events pertaining to the support of the SDGs and/or Public/Private Partnerships (PPPs). It was felt that the communications elements of the strategy should also encapsulate these efforts to further raise awareness. The Executive Committee agreed on the need to clarify the types of engagements that would be appropriate between GEO and commercial industry and requested the Secretariat to develop an Options Paper on this topic for the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

The Secretariat Director presented an overview of the lessons learned from **GEO-X Plenary and the Geneva Ministerial Summit**. The event attracted the highest level of attendance to date. The Secretariat received positive feedback, in particular on the number and quality of the Side Events. The Exhibition was also well-received. The Executive Committee acknowledged that the event had been well-attended, but raised questions about the number of Ministers, Member countries and Participating Organisations present, and requested more information in this regard. The Executive Committee expressed some concern on the selection of high-level speakers at the event and requested that there be wider consultation at the Executive Committee level for future events. The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation to Switzerland for hosting the event.

The Executive Committee considered a presentation on the preparations for the **GEO-XI Plenary**. The presentation included an overview of Gabon's interest in hosting the event, the current status of the agenda, logistics and the communications plan. The Executive Committee requested to be provided a more elaborate communications plan for the Plenary that includes possible headline stories to attract media attention to the event. In view of the short timeframe before the start of the Plenary, the Secretariat was requested to present a revised plan to the Executive Committee by 5 September. The Executive Committee Members are requested to provide nominations for the Communications Task Force and any suggestions for keynote speaker(s) at the event.

The Secretariat Director provided an overview of the past locations of the Ministerial Summits.

The Executive Committee agreed to look into possibilities of co-locating the **GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial Summit** in Paris with the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) event that is scheduled from 30 November to 11 December 2015.

The Executive Committee considered the Interim Report from the **Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG)** and the proposal for the revised draft Terms of Reference for the group. The Executive Committee expressed its appreciation for the Report, and thanked, in particular, the two co-facilitators: Danielle Lacasse (Canada) and Stuart Minchin (Australia). The Executive Committee provided the following guidance to the IPWG:

- 1) clarify definitions of information and knowledge and define the context in which they are used;
- 2) encourage the group to pose existential questions, respecting the strong guidance provided by the Ministers. The IPWG has been trying to operate between these two poles, and has found some definitions are constraining, but will be mindful that clarifying 'who and what GEO is' must be done;
- 3) include governance and the societal challenges in the Implementation Plan; and
- 4) characterize GEO's alignment with other initiatives (e.g., Belmont Forum, Future Earth, GFCS).

The revised Terms of Reference for the group were approved.

The Executive Committee considered the document entitled **Principles of Governance and Oversight between Executive Committee and the Secretariat**, proposed and prepared by the European Commission and United States Co-Chairs. The document was designed to prompt discussion on the expectations and scope of activities of the Secretariat. The current Rules of Procedure are quite explicit and the question was raised on whether changes should be made. It was agreed that the views of both the Executive Committee and Secretariat would be sought, and that this topic would be included on the agenda of the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee.

This **Selection of the GEO Secretariat Director** was taken up in several closed sessions resulting in the unanimous decision to reappoint, without competition, the incumbent for another term.

The Executive Committee noted the report on **Target and Task Progress** with appreciation.

The Executive Committee considered the report from the **Implementation Boards**. The Executive Committee noted that improvements to the communication and operating mechanisms of the Boards needed to be considered. This was also an element that should be considered within the IPWG process.

The Executive Committee noted with appreciation the work of the **Data Sharing Working Group**.

The Executive Committee noted with appreciation the update from the **Data Management Principles Task Force**. It requested Members to provide answers to the questions posed on behalf of the Task Force in coordination with the Secretariat.

The Executive Committee accepted the recommendations for the renewal of **Implementation Board membership** to be presented at Plenary.

The Executive Committee noted with appreciation the presentation of the **5th Evaluation Report - Climate, Weather and Water**, and acknowledged the dedication of the team, in particular, that of Lars Ingolf Eide.

John Adamec informed the Executive Committee on the process for updating the document **Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations**, for submittal to GEO-XI Plenary.

The Executive Committee considered briefly the **Secretariat Operations Report**. It requested that future reports include a list of the Special Services Agreements in use. Mission exact dates must also be indicated.

The Executive Committee noted the **2013 Financial Statements** and the clean (unqualified) **Audit Opinion from the Swiss National Auditors**.

The overall financial status is sound. The Total assets have increased by CHF 0.4 m from CHF 2.9 m at 31 Dec 2012 (which included cash of CHF 2.6 m) to CHF 3.3 m (including cash of CHF 3.1 m) at 31 Dec 2013. The total liabilities have decreased by CHF 0.3 m from CHF 0.9 m at 31 Dec 2012 to CHF 0.6 m (these liabilities are primarily for long-term employee benefits) at 31 Dec 2013. As a result of the above changes in total assets and total liabilities, GEO Secretariat's net assets increased by CHF 0.7 m during 2013, from CHF 2.0 m at 31 Dec 2012 to CHF 2.7 m at 31 Dec 2013. This represents the cash requirement for 10 months of operations. There was a surplus of CHF 0.4 m in 2013, compared to a deficit of CHF 0.2 m in 2012. (However, the 2.0 m carry over was maintained). The revenue of CHF 4.7 m in 2013 had increased from CHF 4.5 m in 2012.

The 2013 expenditure reached CHF 4.3 m, compared to CHF 4.8 m in 2012. The expenditure was well within budget of CHF 5.9 m.

As in previous years, it is difficult to align expenditures with actual income because of unpredictable timing and amount of contributions. The Audit concluded it would be helpful if this could be rectified.

The Executive Committee considered with appreciation the report and work of the **Budget Working Group**. The Committee accepted the recommendation to adopt the 2014 budgetary annexes and agreed that the format of the document should be maintained for future presentations of the Budget.

The Budget Working Group was requested to develop a proposal for the 32nd Session of the Executive Committee on options, conditions and/or criteria for the:

- Use of Special Services Agreements (SSAs), including consideration on thresholds;
- Secretariat travel budget;
- Budget line flexibility;
- Support to developing countries; and
- Revision of Budget Working Group Terms of Reference based on new assignments.

The Secretariat Director highlighted that the **Interim Report on Income and Expenditure** had incorporated the best practice of providing the Executive Committee with a revised prediction of year-end income and expenditure, which has, again, been included in this document. As can be seen in the document, there is a current deficit, and some pledges have yet to be made known to the Secretariat.

The Executive Committee considered the **evaluation of applications of new Participating Organizations (POs)**. Concerns were raised on the over-abundance of POs (considering actual contributions), and on the proposal to recommend to Plenary to accept two applications from organizations in Africa. A request was made that further information be provided on those organizations, so it can be considered in advance of the next meeting.

Under **Any Other Business**, the Secretariat was requested to propose restructuring of document presentation for Executive Committee meetings, for example:

- Documents presented «For discussion / Not for discussion», acknowledging that any Executive Committee Member may request that a «Not for discussion» document could be moved to the «For discussion» category.

3 THE 32ND MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The meeting was held in Geneva on 11-12 November 2014 and chaired by Kathy Sullivan, the GEO Co-Chair representing the United States.

The following actions were agreed:

Agenda point 3: Principles of Governance and Oversight: Survey Results:

Action **32.1**: Executive Committee will undertake further effort to explore its roles and responsibilities.

- Who: US, AUS, EC, JPN, SA;
- When: Prior to the 33rd session of the Executive Committee.

Agenda point 7: Proposal for a Performance Evaluation Process for the GEO Secretariat Director:

Action **32.2**: Executive Committee will reframe 360 degree assessment.

- Who: EC, AUS:
- When:
 - All Executive Committee invited to provide feedback by 1 December, draft to be proposed prior to year-end;
 - Secretariat Director will be invited to comment.

Action **32.3**: Executive Committee will develop annual performance metrics for appraisal of Secretariat Director prior to year-end.

- Who: US;
- When:
 - All Executive Committee invited to provide feedback by 1 December, draft to be proposed prior to year-end;
 - Secretariat Director will be invited to comment.

Agenda point 11: Dates of future Meetings:

Action **32.4**: Executive Committee requests the European Commission to use appropriate channels to negotiate with France regarding alignment of GEO-XII and Ministerial with CoP.

The Executive Committee agreed the following recommendations to GEO-XI Plenary:

Agenda point 10.3: Evaluation of New Participating Organizations:

- The Executive Committee recommends that Plenary accept the proposed slate of ten new Participating Organizations;
- To achieve improved efficiency, Executive Committee recommends that Plenary adopt a moratorium on admission of Participating Organizations until deliberations of IPWG are completed and direction of the 2015 Ministerial provided.

Agenda point 10.7: Towards Data Management Principles:

- Executive Committee recommends extension of Data Management Task Force mandate by one year, to develop Implementation Guidelines for GEOSS Data Management Principles.

ANNEX
**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).	Fulfilled.	Agreed.
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. Secretariat operations reports prepared in January, July and November (2014).	Agreed.
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).	Fulfilled. Task Sheet updates coordinated by GEO Secretariat. Three reports prepared for Executive Committee meetings and one for GEO-X.	Agreed.
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).	Fulfilled. Secretariat operations and financial statements have been submitted to all Executive Committee meetings. Financial statements have been audited every year and successive “audit (s) revealed no weaknesses or errors”	Agreed.
e) Organize, prepare, and support meetings and other work of the GEO Plenary, Executive Committee, and other GEO committees and working groups;	Implementation Board reports to the Executive Committee and to Plenary.	Fulfilled. Three Executive Committee meetings, numerous teleconferences of Boards, and Board	Agreed.

GEO Secretariat Duties	Supporting Documents	GEO Secretariat Assessment	Executive Committee Comments
		meetings, the annual Work Plan Symposium and substantial support to the IPWG this year.	
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).	Fulfilled. Letters sent to all GEO Principals requesting additional contributions, and request for secondments in targeted areas.	Agreed.
g) Oversee the implementation of the GEO communication strategy;	Updates included in Secretariat Operations Report and Executive Committee documents.	In progress. Additional staff support being sought through secondments. Website revamped and Twitter account established (#GEO2025).	Agreed.
h) Organize the GEOSS user and other fora as required in coordination with GEO Boards as appropriate;	Private sector think tank, Workshop “Forging Ties with GEOSS – A Value-Proposition Dialogue” and others. Session held as an initial step towards a broader private sector engagement forum.	In process. Engagement Strategy and Options papers presented at July and November Executive Committee meetings.	Agreed. Besides the commercial sector, it is worth to look for opportunities for discussions with thematic user communities (e.g. users in water-food-energy nexus area) to discuss the strategic role of EO
i) Facilitate overall cooperation and liaise with GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and other programmes and bodies as appropriate or as needed to support the work of GEO, with particular emphasis on existing	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	On-going. Updates included in each Secretariat Operations Report. Five new Members and 10 new Participating Organizations applied to join in 2014.	Agreed but encourage additional thinking about how to re-engage less active or disengaged current Members and POs in the

GEO Secretariat Duties	Supporting Documents	GEO Secretariat Assessment	Executive Committee Comments
systems and Earth observation coordination mechanisms;			GEO efforts.
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. Performance appraisals are conducted annually with each staff member identifying progress and challenges.	Agreed.
k) Ensure an open and transparent process is utilized for the engagement of all Secretariat employees, including short-term contractors, and for the designation of experts to the various GEO Boards and Working Groups;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Fulfilled. Executive Committee requested additional procedures be implemented for the SSA process. This will go into effect in 2015.	Agreed.
l) Facilitate and coordinate the updating of the 10-Year Implementation Plan as directed by the Plenary;	GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan Update.	Fulfilled.	Agreed.
m) Conduct the day-to-day administrative activities of the Secretariat;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Fulfilled. Internal procedures regarding appointments have been harmonized.	Agreed.
n) Carry out additional duties as required by GEO.	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document).	Fulfilled. Substantial work was done this year on seeking Observer status and participating in UN Conventions and policy fora where GEO's work can contribute.	Agreed.