

Transition Plan

From 2015 into the next GEO decade

This Document is submitted to the GEO-XII Plenary for information

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1 INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the new “GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS”, while keeping many GEO features that the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) has found strong and effective, will also lead to changes affecting GEO’s structures, processes and activities.

Based on the inputs and the suggestions made by the IPWG, the Executive Committee, during its teleconference on 9 September, determined that the transition of GEO into the next decade should be carefully managed. The Secretariat was tasked to develop a Transition Plan, based on Executive Committee input.

Anticipating the acceptance of the Strategic Plan by Plenary, and its subsequent endorsement at the Ministerial Summit, this document provides a summary description of the main elements that will be impacted by the Strategic Plan provisions and describes the actions to be undertaken, so that the transition be fully achieved in 2016, a year of transition, and GEO would be ready to implement its first 3-year Work Programme starting in 2017.

Recognizing that a transition includes two different, but integrated “dimensions”, the institutional and the individual, this document largely focuses on the institutional dimension. The Secretariat, GEO Principals, and the GEO Community at large are encouraged to applaud the efforts of individuals involved in the old structure and mechanisms, and encourage early adoption of the new structure and mechanisms.

2 TRANSITION PRINCIPLES AND DIMENSIONS

Following the IPWG recommendations, the following principles will inform the transition plan:

- Ensuring that momentum is kept;
- Promoting seamlessness during the transition;
- Fostering engagement among all relevant players.

The above principles apply to both dimensions previously described:

- The institutional dimension, which should ensure that all the necessary functions are transferred/implemented in a timely fashion so that no overlaps nor gaps are introduced (e.g. transferring Board, Working Group functions into the new governance and implementation arrangements); and
- The individual dimension that should ensure that each person in the GEO Community, contributing to GEO in a multitude of ways, sees clearly his/her place in the new arrangements and that everyone is both acknowledged for their past contributions and given the opportunity to remain engaged.

3 MAJOR CHANGES EXPECTED FROM THE NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

As identified in the introduction, the implementation of the new Strategic Plan will lead to changes affecting GEO’s structures, processes and activities. These changes are summarized in the table below

and include the three identified areas of Organization/Management, Implementation Tools and Mechanisms, and GEO Core Functions.

Area	First decade	Second decade
<p>Organization/Management <i>(mechanisms and bodies identified in the revised GEO Rules of Procedure)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plenary; • Executive Committee; • Three Implementation Boards; • A Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group; • A Data Sharing Working Group; • A Data Management Task Force. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plenary (no changes implied); • Executive Committee; (increased representation for Members, three Observer seats assigned to Participating Organizations <u>and are members of the Programme Board</u>, better focused Terms of Reference); • A Programme Board.
<p>Implementation Tools and Mechanisms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-year Work Plan, not including the Secretariat and institutional activities (i.e. communication and engagement); • GEO activities (Tasks and Task Components) are compiled and grouped into SBAs and cross-cutting areas (Infrastructure and Institution & Development); • Compilation of the expected contributions; • Boards to ensure coordination among different tasks; • Secretariat role to facilitate Work Plan implementation; • Complex, reporting system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-year Work Programmes, describing all GEO activities, including the Secretariat responsibilities; • GEO activities are described based on their type (and associated Implementation mechanism) as Foundational Tasks, Community Activities, GEO Initiatives and GEO Flagships; • Resources are matched with planned activities and results; • Secretariat responsible for coordinating the Foundational Tasks and reporting on their execution; • Reporting systems commensurate with type of activity.
<p>GEO New/better focused activities derived from Core Functions in the Strategic Plan</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying user needs and addressing gaps in the information chain; • Implementing sustained global and regional services (through GEO Initiatives and Flagships); • Knowledge base development; • Stronger focus on communication and engagement.

4 IMPLEMENTING THE CHANGES IN GOVERNANCE

4.1 General

In applying the transition principles, the table in section 3 implies the need to quickly proceed to appointing the Programme Board and to the nomination of Executive Committee Members for 2016, including additional Members and Participating Organizations as Observers.

4.2 Appointment of the Programme Board

Following the IPWG recommendation, the Executive Committee has agreed to take action so that the Programme Board could be appointed by GEO-XII Plenary in November, so that it can be fully operational and hold its first meeting in January 2016.

The Executive Committee, therefore, tasked the Secretariat, based on the Programme Board Terms of Reference¹ defined by IPWG, to activate the process of nomination according to the following timeline:

Time	Action
30 September 2015	Secretariat to issue official call for nominations, noting that members can be drawn from GEO Members and Participating Organizations (POs).
21 October 2015	Nominations due back to Secretariat.
27 October 2015	Secretariat forwards nominations and proposed Board composition to Executive Committee for consideration and review.
10 November 2015	Executive Committee to develop formal recommendations on Board composition for Plenary action.
11-12 November 2015	Subject to Plenary acceptance of the Strategic Plan. Plenary acts on final Board composition.

4.3 Executive Committee Members and Observers Nomination

Members

The renewal of Executive Committee membership will take place through the usual mechanisms, i.e. by decision of the respective caucuses. The Secretariat will inform the GEO Caucuses of the number of Members each of them should express. Individual caucus meetings will take place on Wednesday, 11 November and be announced on Thursday, 12 November.

Observers

Executive Committee Observers will represent GEO Participating Organizations. The IPWG has proposed that the Programme Board will choose up to 3 individuals to sit as Observers on the Executive Committee. This selection will most likely take place at a dedicated session of the first Programme Board meeting. In any case, the Observers should be identified by mid-February 2016, so that they can start their mandate with the first Executive Committee meeting in 2016, currently scheduled for 8-9 March 2016.

¹ Programme Board Terms of Reference are included in the proposed revision of the GEO Rules of Procedure and are attached as Attachment 1 to this document.

5 TRANSITIONING THE ORGANIZATIONAL/MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS

The proposals of the IPWG call for modifications to the organizational structure, aiming to align governance, management, and implementing structures more clearly with the core functions of GEO.

In particular, many of the functions currently assigned to the GEO Implementation Boards and Working Groups will continue to be within the scope of GEO's actions and will be transitioned to the new proposed structures. The IPWG has performed, together with the Secretariat and with some contributions from current Boards, an initial analysis of this transition, whose results are summarized in the following table. This table shows how different functions will be taken up by the Programme Board and/or Secretariat, and shows specific Foundational Tasks identified in the 2016 Work Programme.

Current GEO structure	Purpose, current mandate /function (from RoP, ToR)	Transition to:
Infrastructure Implementation Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress towards Targets; • Coordinate activities among Tasks; • Advise on Task Implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some functions transfer to Programme Board and to GEO Secretariat; • Foundational Task Working Group (current GD-07 GCI Development, GD-02 GCI Operations).
Institutions and Development Implementation Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress towards Targets; • Coordinate activities among Tasks ID-01 through ID-05; • Advise on Task Implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some functions transfer to Programme Board and to GEO Secretariat; • Different Foundational Task (current CD-01 CB coordination, CD-03 Benefits from EO, SO-04 Resources Mobilization).
Societal Benefits Implementation Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress towards Targets; • Coordinate activities among Tasks; • Advise on Task Implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some functions transfer to Programme Board and to GEO Secretariat; • Foundational Task (current GD-08 User needs GD-09 Knowledge).
M&E Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate monitoring and evaluation of GEOSS implementation until 2015. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some functions transfer to Programme Board, some to GEO Secretariat; • Foundational Task (SO-03: M&E).
Data Sharing Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put into practice the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles (DSPs), the Implementation Guidelines for the DSPs and the Data Sharing Action Plan. Responsible for executing Task ID-01. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundational Task (GD-01: Advancing GEOSS Data Sharing Principles).
Data Management Principles Task Force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support GEO in the definition and endorsement of GEOSS Data Management Principles by GEO-XII. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundational Task Working Group (GD-07: GCI development).

Budget Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise Executive Committee on GEO Secretariat budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In large, its functions assumed by the Programme Board. Executive Committee to re-assess the need for specific Budget Task Force; The proposed update to GEO Rules of Procedure proposes to discontinue the Budget Working Group.
Implementation Plan Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a draft Implementation Plan for endorsement at the 2015 Ministerial summit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discontinued.

The draft transitional GEO Work Programme for 2016 reflects the results of this analysis, addresses the new/better focused GEO core functions and, therefore, is deemed to provide, together with the proposals in section 5, the necessary arrangements to implement a smooth and seamless transition.

6 ENSURING CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT OF KEY PLAYERS

The IPWG made it clear that it is essential that those individuals active in the current GEO groups be acknowledged for their past contributions, remain committed and continue their active engagement.

Once clarified how the functions of the current structures are transitioned during the next phase, the fostering of this seamless engagement will happen in different ways and GEO Members and POs, as well as the Secretariat will play key roles to ensure success, under the guidance of the Executive Committee.

Following the input from the Executive Committee, each GEO Member and Participating Organization is, therefore, encouraged to facilitate this process and recall, when appropriate, the key features of this transition. Specific actions are additionally proposed to further facilitate such a process:

- Nomination of individuals serving on the current Boards/Working Groups to the Programme Board (*Members and POs*);
- Acknowledgement letters and specific invitations to continue engagement (*GEO Secretariat, GEO Co-Chairs*);
- Dedicated briefings/discussions on the new implementation arrangements (*GEO Secretariat*);
- A dedicated session at the first meeting of the Programme Board, to gather additional inputs from the first GEO decade in order to ensure a smooth transition.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This document, based on the new organizational arrangements defined in the “GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS” identifies a clear path for the transition of the current functions and implementation of the new ones. Assuming that the first meeting of the Programme Board will take place in January 2015, the completion of this transfer of functions will take place before the Executive Committee meeting in March, which would, therefore, acknowledge completion upon positive reporting from the Programme Board and Secretariat.

APPENDIX 1

GEO Programme Board Terms of Reference

As proposed in the updated GEO Rules of Procedure, GEO-XII Plenary Document 17 [rev2](#)

1 GEO PROGRAMME BOARD

- 1.1 **Function:** The GEO Programme Board supports the on-going development and implementation of the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016 – 2025: Implementing GEOSS through multi-year GEO Work Programmes*.

Specifically, the GEO Programme Board:

- Works to ensure the overall coherence and alignment of the GEO Work Programmes with GEO's Strategic Objectives and Core Functions;
- Works to align the scope and substance of tasks, GEO Initiatives and Flagships in the GEO Work Programme with the resources committed by Members and Participating Organizations;
- Supports and enables cross-cutting coordination and knowledge exchange, especially best practices; and
- Promotes GEO Work Programmes and engagement of stakeholders in their implementation.

- 1.2 **Duties:** The GEO Programme Board will:

- a. Review the scope and substance of activities proposed for the multi-year GEO Work Programme;
- b. Review the progress of GEO Foundational Tasks, Initiatives and Flagships;
- c. Confirm that resources committed are commensurate to the activities scoped for inclusion in the Work Programme;
- d. Recommend GEO Work Programmes for Plenary acceptance;
- e. Examine proposed Implementation Plans for GEO Initiatives and take decisions to accept new ones;
- f. Recommend GEO Flagships for Plenary acceptance;
- g. Provide high-level recommendations to the Executive Committee;
- h. Nominate Participating Organization observers to the Executive Committee; and
- i. Establish advisory groups to address specific topics as needed.
- j. Undertake such other tasks as may be delegated to the Programme Board by Executive Committee or Plenary.

- 1.3 **Term:** The Board's term will be for the full duration of the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016 – 2025: Implementing GEOSS*.
- 1.4 **Membership:** The Board comprises persons serving as GEO Members and Participating Organisation representatives. Programme Board members are expected to take a whole-of-GEO perspective, working constructively towards common objectives. The Executive Committee will review the nominations and recommend the entire Programme Board membership for appointment by Plenary. The Executive Committee will ensure that there is a balance in the membership of the Programme Board.
- The GEO Programme Board will number no fewer than 16 and no more than 32 members. At least 40% of Programme Board members will be from GEO Members and at least 40% will be from Participating Organizations. Programme Board members will serve for a term of up to 3 years. During the transitional year 2016, Programme Board members will serve an initial term of one year. In all instances, Programme Board members may be re-nominated.
- Programme Board members from Participating Organisations will select from among themselves up to 3 Participating Organisations as observers on the Executive Committee, for a term of up to 3 years, in synchronization with Board membership. These observers may be renewed.
- 1.5 **Leadership:** The Board will select three of its members to serve as co-chairs of the Programme Board. At least one Co-Chair should come from a GEO Member and one from Participating Organization nominees. Co-chairs serve for a term of up to three years and may be renewed.
- 1.6 **Decision:** The Board works by consensus. At least 50 per cent attendance is required for quorum. With repeated failure to reach quorum, the Programme Board co-chairs may request the Executive Committee to draw additional representatives from the list of proposed nominees to replace in-active Programme Board members.
- 1.7 **Meetings:** The Programme Board meets physically at least twice per annum. Meetings are generally held at the GEO Secretariat for convenience. Other meetings, including through electronic means, may be convened by the Programme Board co-chairs. Meeting documents will be available at least four weeks prior to a meeting to allow the required national/internal consultation processes to occur.
- 1.8 **Reporting:** The Programme Board will post a report on the GEO website within two weeks of each meeting held, including a list of all participants and key outcomes. In addition, Programme Board co-chairs will report to the Plenary through the GEO Work Programme, and will also deliver regular progress reports to the Executive Committee.

- 1.9 **Funding:** Costs arising from the Programme Board's activities will be borne by the GEO Member or Participating Organization that incurs them. In specific, exceptional circumstances, participation in Programme Board activities may be supported from the GEO Trust Fund, subject to the availability of funds, personnel, and other resources, and agreement of Plenary or the Executive Committee.
- 1.10 **Support and Coordination:** The Secretariat will provide administrative support to the Programme Board. The activities of the Programme Board will be closely coordinated with the Secretariat and other GEO entities to maintain consistency with the approved GEO Strategic Plan, and to maximize the effectiveness of the GEO and the implementation of GEOSS.