

2016 Report of the Executive Committee

This Document is submitted to the Executive Committee for decision.

DRAFT TEXT FOR INCLUSION IN THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE 39TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The Executive Committee approved the Summary Report of its deliberations in 2016, which is comprised of the Executive Summaries of the three Meetings held in 2016 -- March, July and November.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the key actions and decisions taken at the 36th Meeting (8-9 March, Geneva, Switzerland), the 37th Meeting (6-7 July, Geneva, Switzerland), and the 38th Meeting (8 November, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation). The approved minutes of individual Executive Committee Meetings can be found on the GEO [website](#).

2 THE 36TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The meeting was chaired by Dr Kathryn Sullivan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), representing the United States.

The Executive Committee reviewed the GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial Summit, recognizing the overall success of the events and the advantages of, at times, co-locating GEO Week with other events. Issues raised for consideration during preparation of the GEO-XIII Plenary included: whether to extend Plenary by one day; how to integrate the private sector into a portion of the proceedings; and how to make Plenary more strategic and engaging.

The committee considered the draft Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan, which is based on three primary objectives: 1) establish GEO as THE leading global advocate for broad, open data policies; 2) establish GEO as a key intergovernmental mechanism to ensure that Earth observations (EO) underpin global environmental decision-making; and 3) ensure that the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) is the primary resource for EO data and information for better decision-making. The Committee requested further iteration of the plan be prepared which would reflect: an introductory rationale for the particular areas of focus for GEO's engagement; objectives that are outcome/purpose-focused; the perspective of those with whom GEO wants to engage; and an element of developing narratives demonstrating "what GEO can do".

The Committee discussed the need to obtain more robust pledge commitments in the near term, and the expectation that the 2016 income would not likely reach the budget approved by the GEO-XII Plenary, with resulting implications for the staffing and scope of work of the Secretariat. A call was issued for additional participation in the Budget Working Group (BWG).

The Committee met *in camera* with the Secretariat Director and in Executive Session to discuss the Director's 360-Degree Feedback Results and Performance Appraisal. The Committee commended the Director on both sets of results and expressed its complete and unwavering confidence in her as the Director of the Secretariat, and appreciation for the progress the Secretariat has made over the last year.

The Committee considered a report of the Programme Board on the results of its first meeting, held in January. The Board received guidance from the Executive Committee: to be a self-confident partner of the Executive Committee, providing priorities, advice, recommendations and questions; prioritize the Foundational Tasks, including considering whether to drop or trim certain activities depending on the resources available; and to examine issues around GEO branding and the gaps between user needs and GEO products.

The Committee received a briefing from the Government of Switzerland on the several options available to GEO regarding its legal status (become an international organization; establish a legal personality as an independent Foundation or Association; or establish a legal personality, but remain under the WMO Host State Agreement). The Committee agreed a further analysis of the pros/cons and cost/benefits of each option are required and requested the Secretariat to prepare a scope-of-work to conduct such an analysis.

The applications for Participating Organizations (European Association of Remote Sensing Companies (EARSC); Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies (JBGIS); and the Mountain Research Initiative (MRI)) and for Observer (Asia-Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum (APRSAF)) were accepted.

3 THE 37TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The meeting was chaired by Dr Liao Xiaohan, Deputy Director General, Institute of Geographic Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences representing China.

The Committee discussed the STATE OF PLAY OF GEOSS document proposed by the Secretariat which proposed a reassessment of progress towards the original vision of a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). The Committee requested that a subgroup, comprised of representatives from the Executive Committee, Programme Board and Secretariat, be formed to further frame issues and produce a two-page strategy for GEOSS comprising the broader aspects and implications for the GEOSS value chain: from federated observing systems to identification of gaps to use for policy and decision-making.

The Executive Committee noted with appreciation a presentation of Prof. Philip Diamond, Director General, SKA. The SKA project is in its building phase for the next four years with a budget of Eur. 179 Million. The total life span, once operational is expected to be 50 years. The governing body is pursuing International Organization Status (IGO) through the adoption by the Members States of a treaty.

The Committee appreciated the work and report of the Programme Board. The recommendations made by the Programme Board were discussed with additional guidance provided in the areas of composition (to be based on results of the subgroup deliberations referenced above), tenure and voting procedures.

The Committee considered the current progress on the 2016 Work Programme. The formation of all Task Teams and identification of co-leads is almost complete and “Kick-off” teleconferences were run for all the Tasks. The Work Programme Symposium was a great opportunity for many of the teams to meet and advance progress on the activities. The Secretariat (through identified Experts) is supporting each of the Tasks, in accordance with the Work Programme provisions, pending resource constraints in some areas.

The Committee noted with appreciation the Budget Working Group’s (BWG) presentation of the Interim Financial Statement as of 31 May 2016. The Co-Chairs agreed to co-sign a letter to GEO Principals, as proposed by the BWG to elevate the importance of additional contributions to the Trust Fund, and Work Programme. The Executive Committee approved the 2015 Financial Statement and Audit Report.

The Committee considered an update on the Engagement Strategic Implementation Plan called for a small team to be formed to further develop the Implementation Plan, with guidance that the first two engagement objectives remain as framed, and that the third engagement objective be broadened. There was still a need to define main high level messages. Mr Jack Metthey of the European Commission will lead this team with additional nominations being sought from the Executive Committee and Secretariat.

The Committee noted with appreciation the work thus far of the Subgroup and their consultations to date with the Commercial Sector. The Subgroup was asked to continue their consultations, and to propose a Session be included in the upcoming GEO-XIII Plenary, including representatives from the commercial sector. Having considered the input from the commercial sector, the session will explore opportunities for collaboration and engagement based on specific themes, to be recommended by the subgroup, as well as to seek additional feedback from Plenary.

The Committee recommended the need for a much more creative and radical restructuring of the GEO-XIII Plenary agenda. They also recommended the use of interactive tools to insert more real-time feedback into the Plenary and potentially provide a different format for delivery of formal Statements.

The Committee considered an update on GEO Legal Status and approved the proposal from WMO to strengthen the current Standing of the GEO Secretariat under the WMO framework. This would be attained through a renewal the Standing Arrangement between GEO and WMO, with written acknowledgement of Switzerland of this strengthened arrangement.

Eight new Participating Organizations were approved. The Association of Geospatial Industries (AGI); the African Regional Centre for Space Science and Technology Education-English (ARCSSTEE); the Arab States Research and Education Network (ASREN); the Global Flood Partnership (GFP); the Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT); the Integrated Carbon Observation System (ICOS); the World Ocean Council (WOC); and the World Health Organization (WHO). It was agreed that the Dartmouth Flood Observatory (DFO) be included in either the US contributions to GEO, and/or the Global Flood Partnership, as DFO is a contributing member of GFP.

4 THE 38TH MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The meeting was chaired by Dr Philemon Mjwara, Director General, Department of Science and Technology representing the Republic of South Africa

The Committee welcomed the discussion paper on the Strategic Outlook for 2017 and beyond introduced by the U.S. Co-Chair, and the draft Principles proposed by the GEO Secretariat. Committee Members committed to strengthening their efforts to ensure deliberations occur at a level commensurate with their role and responsibilities as the senior-most body charting the strategic direction for GEO, for the intercessional periods between Plenary Sessions.

To improve continuity from meeting-to-meeting, it was suggested that one GEO Co-Chair serve as lead Co-Chair for the duration of one year. The European Commission Co-Chair was proposed and accepted by ExCom as the first year-long Chair for 2017.

The Committee considered the report from the Programme Board. Mr Tim Haigh (2016 PB co-chair representing EEA) summarized lessons learned by noting:

- Opportunities for more direct communication between the Programme Board (PB) and Committee should be leveraged from the outset;
- Concern that expectations for prompt and coordinated PB response to ad-hoc requests affect expectations on PB in relation to other functions and duties; and
- A potential threat identified was as GEO products and outputs become more policy relevant they may overstate mandate and use in formal policy cycle decision-making processes with potential impact on GEO brand and stakeholder relations.

Mr Stephen Briggs (2016 PB member representing CEOS) summarized the present and future work of the PB on Supporting Sustainable Development Goals – an analysis of the 2017-2019 Work Programme by noting:

- The results of the mapping exercise showed that 26 out of 31 Community Activities contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, eight identify specific targets);

all 22 Initiatives contribute to SDGs (specific targets); and four out of four Flagships contribute to SDGs; and

- A longer term analysis would be the next step, employing more direct approach that addresses all targets and indicators systematically, to identify where Earth observations (EO) and geospatial data can contribute to achieving the SDGs.

The Committee appreciated the work of the Programme Board and stated that:

- Future analysis work needs to clarify actual contributions, latent links, and gaps;
- To increase GEO's global capability, additional time should be spent identifying globally applicable products;
- Members of the Committee must communicate GEO's contributions back to their governments; and
- The Committee plans to recommend to Plenary that the GEO Work Programme should be informed by major policy initiatives (e.g. the Sustainable Development Goals -SDGs).

The Committee reviewed the applications for the GEO Programme Board 2017-2019 and adopted the Secretariat recommendations for the 2017 Programme Board to be proposed to Plenary, noting that any gaps in expertise should be addressed through nominations during the yearly 1/3 turnover.

4.1 GEO Engagement Priorities for 2017-2019

The Committee considered a report on GEO Engagement Priorities for 2017-2019 from Mr Jack Metthey (Director Climate Action and Resource Efficiency, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission), who presented the five priorities developed by the GEO Engagement Strategy Subgroup for endorsement by the Committee. These priorities are intended to act as drivers for key engagement actions to be articulated in the 2017-2019 Multiannual Implementation Plan, while serving to demonstrate GEO is delivering on the Mexico Declaration commitments by 2019. The proposed priorities are:

1. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
2. Climate Change – Greenhouse Gas Monitoring;
3. Disaster Risk Reduction;
4. Resilient cities and human settlements; and
5. Ecosystem accounting.

The Committee welcomed the Subgroup's recommendations on engagement priorities and endorsed the first three priorities (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; Climate Change – Greenhouse Gas Monitoring; and Disaster Risk Reduction).

The considered the draft agenda for GEO-XIII for the Secretariat Director. She noted that the goal was to make Plenary more interactive, to not simply follow the same formats as before. She observed that the intent of the Work Programme portion on the 2nd day was to provide Plenary with sufficient information to inform the following discussion on programmatic contributions and pledges.

The Committee endorsed the draft GEO-XIII Plenary agenda as responding to their input from the July (37th) Committee meeting, particularly in regards to Formal Statements and Panel Sessions.

The Committee stressed the importance of tangible actions and/or results emanating from each of the Panel discussions in the form of three key messages from each.

The Committee considered the Report of the Budget Working Group (BWG) presented by Mr John Matuszak (Budget Working Group [BWG] co-chair, USA), who noted that even counting all EU member states in the contribution by the EC, well under 50% of all GEO Members contribute to the GEO Trust Fund. He also commended the Secretariat for its judicious management of the Trust Fund, despite the late arrival and shortfalls in pledges compared with the budget approved by GEO-XII Plenary.

The Committee thanked the BWG for its report and diligent efforts, and acknowledged the Secretariat's careful stewardship of GEO's limited resources.

The Committee adopted the Secretariat recommendations and approved applications for Participating Organization status from:

1. International Long Term Ecological Research Network (ILTER);
2. Logistic Management Institute (LMI); and
3. Sahara and Sahel Observatory (OSS).

Further discussion of the application from Earthmind will be deferred until its legal structure has been clarified.

The Committee agreed on the process and nominal timetable for the selection of the next Director.