

**GROUP on EARTH OBSERVATIONS - BEIJING MINISTERIAL SUMMIT
(5 November 2010)**

**Statement by the Chairman of the Steering Committee for the
Global Climate Observing System (GCOS)
(Professor Adrian Simmons)**

Mr Chairman (or Madam Chair), Ministers, Colleagues,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the Steering Committee for the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS). Our task is to advise on the implementation of the observing systems for atmosphere, ocean and land of our sponsoring and partner organizations, so that these systems together provide an effective global observing system for climate. This composite system serves as the climate-observing component of the GEOSS, and improving it is fundamental for meeting the GEOSS strategic target for climate.

GCOS reviewed progress last year. We reported advances on several fronts, but more limited progress on many others, especially on the actions needed to strengthen basic observing networks in developing countries.

Following on from this, we recently published an updated plan identifying the implementation actions (138 in all) needed to support the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and generally meet GEOSS and other needs for climate observation.

We also reviewed and amended the list of Essential Climate Variables included in the plan. We stressed the need to carry out long-term observation of some of these variables jointly with observation of impacted biological species and habitat properties, an activity that links with GEO initiatives for the biodiversity and ecosystem SBAs.

The GCOS Steering Committee welcomes GEO initiatives that contribute to implementation of the overall climate observing system, and specifically the Global Forest Observation Initiative. Here and more generally, GCOS stresses the importance of combining *in situ* and space-based measurement. In the forecast case, for example, *in situ* measurement is particularly important for soil carbon.

Global observing networks involve contributions from many if not all countries of the world, but can only be truly part of a complete global observing system if their data are managed, made widely accessible, assembled into records and processed in an open manner to yield the information that is needed for policy- and decision-making. GCOS looks to collaborate with partners in the GEO and related communities to strengthen this end-to-end process.

Success can also come only with effective coordination across agencies and disciplines at national as well as international level. In closing these remarks I would thus like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the exemplary way our hosts have undertaken national coordination of GCOS activities in China.

Thank you.