

Statement from GTOS GEO Principal for the GEO Ministerial Summit

5 November 2010, Beijing, China

By the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS)

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We welcome this opportunity to speak on behalf of the Global Terrestrial Observing System programme. We join our previous colleagues and wish to thank the Government of the People's Republic of China for hosting the Group on Earth Observations' Ministerial Summit in Beijing.

GTOS has been working to improve the delivery of global terrestrial observations, integrated from space and ground, in order to improve the assessment of the global change impacts on terrestrial ecosystem services. Improving the quality and coverage of data is a key for better understanding the terrestrial component of the climate system and supporting adaptation and mitigation policies.

GTOS is involved more than ten tasks and subtasks of the last GEO 2009-2011 WorkPlan, covering four out of the nine GEO Societal Benefit Areas (SBAs): Disasters, Climate, Ecosystems and Biodiversity.

GTOS supports the GEO Carbon tasks CL-09-03, including forest Carbon Tracking, and the GEO Carbon Community of Practice. GTOS is strongly committed to provide a strong observational background for addressing the carbon implementation policies.

GTOS leads the GEO task AR-09-03 on Global Terrestrial Observations with the main aim to provide standards for monitoring the Essential Climate Variables (ECVs).

ECVs have been identified as the core set of observations encompassing the atmospheric, oceanic and terrestrial domain required to allow the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other end users to achieve their objectives and mandates. ECVs are needed for the assessment of adaptation to impacts of climatic changes, and for related issues such as characterizing the state of the climate system, predicting future climate change, and enabling the assessment of vulnerability and risk to it.

GTOS support the extension of the concept of Essential Variables and Indicators to other international conventions, namely Biodiversity and Land Degradation and Desertification, where GTOS is actively engaged.

GTOS supports also the GEOBON initiatives by offering the provision of earth observation information useful as biodiversity indicators.

These are concrete example on how GTOS is strongly committed to contribute to GEO mandate by enhancing coordination and standardization process of terrestrial observations.

We would also like to take this opportunity to urge GEO Members to support the provision of improved "in situ" as well as space observations of land, sustaining continuity of operations, inter-operability and expansion of observation capabilities in poorly represented regions, such as Africa.

Thank you