

Australian Ministerial Statement to Geneva Ministerial Summit, 17 January 2014

Chair, Ministers and honoured delegates,

I address you as the representative of the Australian Minister for the Environment, The Honourable Greg Hunt. Minister Hunt regrets he is unable to attend this important Summit but conveys through me a strong and ongoing Australian commitment to GEOSS.

Together as nations, we face immense societal challenges in food security, preservation of our environment, economic sustainability, health and disaster risk reduction. A renewed GEOSS will help governments address these challenges through breaking down barriers across systems, sectors and borders; connecting data users and providers; understanding needs; developing solutions; mobilising resources and collaborators; and facilitating informed decisions and outcomes.

The GEO data policy and its mechanisms to discover and share data have been ground-breaking. An important future focus should be on the use of these observations to deliver practical outcomes, including through resolving basic data access issues in Africa, Latin-America, and Asia-Oceania, and building capacity to interpret and apply data, especially for addressing major disasters.

In short, GEO has demonstrated its ability to 'Think Global', but we encourage increased focus on enabling the 'act local' part of the equation.

The highest net value to society from GEOSS will accrue when efforts are most efficiently and effectively coordinated amongst all GEO Members and Participating Organizations. Together, we can optimise the delivery of capacity building and technical assistance, articulate requirements for data within and across sectors, build connections between needs and solutions, and ensure that data are applied to address national, regional and global needs.

Australia is pleased to endorse the Geneva Ministerial Declaration and we thank the Swiss Confederation for their excellent hospitality at this landmark time in the evolution of GEOSS.