

Background note for Programme Board to prepare and refine Concept for GEO Work Programme Symposium (Proposed May 2017 South Africa)

Symposium: (in ancient Greece and Rome) a convivial meeting, usually following a dinner, for drinking and intellectual conversation. (Dictionary.com)

Introduction

The landscape within which the GEO Work Programme Symposium (WPS) is set has changed significantly since its inception in 2010. Notably, in the same time frame as the development and acceptance of the GEO 2016-2025 Strategic plan:

- The Programme Board has replaced the Implementation Boards and GEO Committees.
 - No longer the need to synchronize disparate bodies working on different parts of the WP.
- A number of regional fora have sprung up and have been strengthened (e.g. GEOSS Asia-Pacific Symposium, AmeriGEOSS, AfriGEOSS, and GEO HLWG and GEO European Projects Workshop (featuring progress and implementation of WP activities, coordination and GEO concerns promoted)
 - No longer the same drivers and need for a pan-WP Symposium since these items are being discussed regionally.
- Advances in GCI and GEOSS Portal are happening on a different timescale than once per year.
 - Not necessary to wait until the WPS to make major announcements.

A key question is, what is the *raison d'être* for a Work Programme Symposium, both for 2017 but also for the longer term? What are the key issues for discussion that cannot be accommodated by the regional fora, or Plenary meetings, ones that merit a 2-day symposium (and in May 2017 will draw the right people all the way to South Africa)?

At its first meeting in 2017, the Programme Board will take a number of decisions about its plan of work for 2017 - 2018 and also how it will input to GEO processes. Part of its interactions need to be with the GEO community. The WPS provides a potential event and milestone to communicate with parts of the GEO community and to obtain inputs to PB deliberations and decisions.

For this reason, PB members are asked before the PB meeting to think about the context of the WPS and explore various ideas that have been captured in a series of poll questions to enable the co-chairs to cluster perspectives and structure the discussion during the meeting. The intention is to create a concept for the WPS in 2017 and a longer term positioning of WPS in annual cycle of GEO as input to EXCOM meeting (deadline 8th Feb). See poll at: [GEO 2017 Work Programme Symposium Survey](#)

Context of Work Programme Symposia

The Work Plan/Programme Symposia (WPS) have been held annually since 2010, usually in Geneva, in the April-May time frame right before the Work Plan was circulated to GEO Principals for review. The WPS were held initially in conjunction with meetings of the then four GEO Committees (User Interface,

Science & Technology, Architecture & Data and Capacity Building). Later, the Implementation Boards (Institutions & Development, Infrastructure and Societal Benefits) met in conjunction with the WPS.

Detailed objectives for each of the WPS may be found in the attached annexes. Briefly, objectives that frequently appeared (see Annexes for details of each, in reverse chronological order):

- Foster WP implementation (through awareness raising, information sharing, networking, etc.).
- Review progress, consolidate activities, improve coordination, reduce redundancies, find synergies, and promote “cross-fertilization”.
- Promote GEOSS Data Sharing and Management Principles.
- Assess whether Strategic Targets were being met.
- Highlight advances in GCI and GEOSS Portal.
- Identify gaps and obstacles (of any nature: observations, resources, etc).
- Identify role for Communities of Practice.
- Promote linkages with SDGs, Sendai Framework and other international agendas.

Perhaps the focus should now be more outward rather than inward, illustrating GEO’s relevance to the community while providing the Programme Board with a ‘temperature check’ on the pertinence of the Work Programme as a whole. Suggested theme for 2017 (Referencing the Mexico City Ministerial Declaration): **GEO’s Work Programme: Delivering Value.**

Sessions could be organized around providing select examples of how GEO is making a difference, with demonstrations of:

- How GEO is responding to the Mexico City Ministerial Declaration.
- How GEOSS is being used by decision makers (at multiple levels: policy, government, regionally, resource managers, etc.)
- How GEO is supporting achievement of major policy initiatives, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, etc.
- How GEO is working with the commercial sector (examples of Public-Private Partnerships, linking to commercial EO catalogues, and ...?).

Each of these examples should also touch upon key components of the Strategic Plan:

- How GEO is addressing its three Strategic Objectives: Advocate, Engage, and Deliver.
- How activities are aligned with GEO Core Functions.

A special session could be devoted to these kinds of examples happening under AfriGEOSS given the location of the event.

The WPS needs to connect to PB related functions and duties - the cycle of progress reporting (linked to M&E) and modifying the WP. It also needs to enable connections between top-down policy drivers and bottom up community proposals, such as in 2017 on SDGs. Lastly the WPS needs to appeal to the participants from the GEO community, without whom success cannot be achieved.

ANNEX A – 2016 Work Programme Symposium

GEO WORK PROGRAMME SYMPOSIUM 2016

2-4 May 2016, GEO Secretariat,

7bis avenue de la Paix,

Geneva, Switzerland

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this first Work Programme Symposium is to engage the GEO Community in the implementation of the new GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS (GEO 2016-2025 SP).

The Symposium will, therefore:

- Reflect on the GEO 2016-2025 SP, on its targets and on the implications on the activities that GEO should put in place;
- Ensure a common understanding of the new arrangements defined by the Strategic Plan (Programme Board, Monitoring and Evaluation, Implementation Mechanisms, role of the Secretariat);
- Ensure a common understanding of what are the links among different processes (GEOSS development and operations, users' needs, knowledge base development, SBAs etc....) and how the Community should plan its involvement;
- Strengthen the participation of the users to the GEO activities;
- Review the approach for GEOSS development (requirements, functional performances, architecture) and provide clear inputs for its further implementation;
- Discuss the content of the GEO Work Programme 2017-2019 and provide clear inputs (technical and programmatic) for its development;
- Strengthen the involvement of current stakeholders and involve new ones identified in the GEO 2016-2025 SP;
- Provide the opportunity to consolidate GEO activities at Global and/or Regional level and explore opportunities for new ones;
- Explore opportunities with the private sector;
- Foster regional (caucus) interactions and discuss the opportunities linked to strengthen GEO action at the regional level; and
- Explore opportunities for new global/regional initiatives.

ANNEX B: 2015 Work Programme Symposium

**GEO WORK PLAN SYMPOSIUM 2015
5-7 May 2015, GEO Secretariat, Room A
7bis avenue de la Paix, Geneva, Switzerland**

General Objectives

- Assess the progress of the current tasks and the achievements for the first GEO decade 2005-2015
- Involve new communities (ref. to new proposed SBAs)
- Discuss how to better exploit recognized GEO linkages with the post-2015 global development agenda, e.g., Sustainable Development Goals
- Discuss how the GEO Community (including new stakeholders) should be organized to support the new GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025
- Discuss current gaps in GEO's activities and make a preliminary identification of activities to be implemented in the next decade
- Discuss and consolidate a preliminary draft of a transitional Work Programme for 2016, developed in accordance with the IPWG guidelines.

ANNEX C: 2014 Work Plan Symposium

GEO WORK PLAN SYMPOSIUM 2014
28-30 April 2014, GEO Secretariat,
7bis avenue de la Paix,
Geneva, Switzerland

OBJECTIVES

General Objectives

Accelerate Work Plan implementation towards GEOSS 2015 Strategic Targets

Prepare for the next phase of GEOSS implementation

Specific Objectives

- Build on GEO initiatives to better meet information needs for decision-making and -planning. Strengthen ongoing global/regional initiatives and explore opportunities for new ones
- Improve data discovery and access through the GEOSS Portal – building on the new versions of the Portal and Discovery & Access Broker (e.g. through user feedbacks and contributions of new resources)
- Enhance GEOSS usefulness (e.g. through showcases and development of new applications and information products)
- Clarify the role of, and relationship with, Community Portals
- Inform and advance the development of GEOSS Data Management Principles and the implementation of the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles
- Better realize the potential of citizen-science and Big Data in GEOSS implementation
- Refine requirements for observations and information (e.g. for adaptation purposes) within and across Societal Benefit areas, with a view to the post-2015 agenda
- Discuss a systematic approach to define, and coordinate records of, variables needed across Societal Benefit Areas. This could rely on the development of “Essential Variables” building on related initiatives for Climate, Biodiversity, and Oceans
- Identify current and future in-situ priorities, and explore ideas for addressing these
- Inform the process for developing the next GEOSS Implementation Plan
- Build on linkages with other international agendas e.g. Sustainable Development Goals
- Explore opportunities with the private sector
- Identify lessons-learned from previous GEO Work Plans and related management

- Develop practical recommendations for the 2015 Work Plan update (Task descriptions and contents)
- Foster regional (caucus) interactions

ANNEX D: 2013 Work Plan Symposium

GEO WORK PLAN SYMPOSIUM 2013

4–6 June 2013, GEO Secretariat,

7bis avenue de la Paix,

Geneva, Switzerland

APPROACH AND OBJECTIVES

The 2013 Work Plan Symposium will focus on the advancement of the Sprint to Summit initiative, development of activities and demonstrators the Sprint to Summit activities and demonstrators. cross-cutting showcases for the GEO-X Plenary and 2014 Ministerial Summit. The Sprint to Summit initiative, managed by the GEO Implementation Boards, will integrate and combine outputs from multiple Societal Benefit Areas thereby demonstrating the GEO added value and relevance to users, decision-makers and society at large. The Sprint to Summit will also give credit to GEO Members and Participating Organizations and visibility to the numerous contributions to GEOSS implementation.

Moreover the Symposium will use the showcases as federating themes and integrators to foster synergies across the Work Plan and accelerate GEOSS implementation. Leads and contributors from all GEOSS areas will be invited to highlight progress and propose contributions and improvements to the showcases interacting with the members of the Implementation Boards. In this context, gaps and issues will also be discussed.

The Symposium will be structured around five showcases:

- (i) One showcase building on “Infrastructure” Tasks and overseen by the Infrastructure Board
- (ii) One showcase building on “Institutions and Development” Tasks and overseen by the Institutions and Development Board
- (iii) Three showcases building on “Societal Benefits” Tasks and overseen by the Societal Benefits Board

Symposium objectives will include:

- (a) Developing cross-cutting showcases for the Ministerial Summit and GEO-X Plenary
- (b) Building synergies across Tasks and accelerating GEOSS implementation
- (c) Informing the Work Plan community of recent outputs and activities
- (d) Developing practical recommendations for the 2014 Work Plan update (Task descriptions and contents)
- (e) Collectively addressing issues and gaps
- (f) Improving Component Sheet contents

ANNEX E: 2012 Work Plan Symposium

“Building Synergies Across the GEO Work Plan”

GEO WORK PLAN SYMPOSIUM 2012

30 April – 2 May 2012, GEO Secretariat,

7bis avenue de la Paix,

Geneva, Switzerland

APPROACH AND OBJECTIVES

The 2012 Work Plan Symposium will focus on the cross-fertilization of the new Work Plan Tasks – bringing together Leads and contributors from all GEOSS areas as well as members of the new Implementation Boards. The Symposium will provide numerous opportunities to exchange information and highlight progress. Gaps and issues will also be extensively discussed, and actions to fill these gaps identified.

The Symposium will be aligned with the three parts of the 2012-2015 Work Plan, namely:

- (i) “Infrastructure” – focusing on the physical components of an operational and sustainable GEOSS, including interoperable observing, modelling and dissemination systems
- (ii) “Institutions and Development” – focusing on data sharing, resource mobilization, capacity development, user engagement, and science and technology integration
- (iii) “Information for Societal Benefits” – focusing on information, tools, and services in support of decision-making across the nine Societal Benefit Areas

Key objectives include:

- (a) Identifying cross-cutting issues and building synergies across Tasks
- (b) Guiding and accelerating Work Plan implementation
- (c) Supporting progress assessment towards the GEOSS 2015 Strategic Targets
- (d) Collectively addressing issues and gaps
- (e) Developing practical recommendations for the 2013 Work Plan update

ANNEX F: 2011 Work Plan Symposium

2nd WPS: 4-6 May 2011, Geneva

Objectives:

The Symposium will play a key role in the development of the 2012-2015 Work Plan, ensuring that Strategic Targets are fully addressed, gaps and missing Tasks are clearly identified, and synergies across GEOSS areas are built upon. The Symposium will be integral to the technical review, which will involve broad consultation and eventually lead to Version 1 of the 2012-2015 Work Plan (to be submitted for official review on 1 September).

The 2012-2015 Work Plan should address three main objectives: (i) the implementation of an operational and sustainable GEOSS offering full and open access and including interoperable observing, modelling and dissemination systems; (ii) the development of information products and end-to-end services tailored to serve society's needs across the nine Societal Benefit Areas; and (iii) the reinforcement of coordination, user engagement and resource mobilization.

In addition, the Symposium will provide, as in 2010, numerous opportunities to highlight progress, exchange information, and foster coordination across the whole Work Plan. This cross-fertilization will directly contribute to GEOSS implementation on a number of fronts including data sharing and registration of data, tools and services in the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI).

ANNEX G: 2010 Work Plan Symposium

GEO WORK PLAN SYMPOSIUM 2010

17-19 May 2010

Pretoria, South Africa

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the Symposium are to:

- Foster the Work Plan Implementation across and within GEOSS areas;
- Develop practical recommendations for the 2011 Work Plan Update;
- Identify achievements that could be presented at Beijing Ministerial Summit Exhibition; and
- Initiate reflections and discussions in preparation of the GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan.

In order to structure the presentations, discussions and syntheses throughout the meeting, participants are encouraged to:

- Identify common inputs, outputs or methodologies across (sub)tasks;
- Explore complementarities across (sub)tasks;
- Identify options for better connecting existing systems (observing, modeling, information) and/or the outputs of those systems (data, products, information);
- Launch practical actions for fostering new and existing interactions across (sub)tasks;
- Evaluate the extent to which existing products, tools, systems and services are already registered in the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI); identify obstacles to registration and options to overcome these obstacles;
- Evaluate the extent to which data and information are already shared within GEO; identify obstacles to data-sharing and options to overcome these obstacles;
- Identify (sub)task components related to Capacity Building, Science and Technology, and User engagement. Strengthen connections with Committees and Communities of Practice;
- Improve Overarching Task and sub-task descriptions/contents;
- Suggest mergers of relevant sub-tasks to improve coordination/reduce duplication;
- Identify opportunities for the Beijing Ministerial Summit Exhibition.