

## **GEO Engagement Priorities for 2017-2019**

*This Document is submitted to the Executive Committee for decision.*

### **DRAFT TEXT FOR INCLUSION IN THE DRAFT REPORT OF THE 38<sup>TH</sup> EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING**

The Executive Committee adopted the Subgroup's recommendations on engagement priorities as presented, and looks forward to their successful implementation.



## GEO Engagement Priorities for 2017-2019

In order to fulfil the aim and goals of the Engagement Strategy that will enable the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) to become *the reference global initiative that facilitates evidence-based environmental decision-making by unlocking the potential of Earth observations*, the following policy priorities for engagement have been identified. These five priorities will act as drivers for the key engagement actions articulated in the GEO Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan for 2017-2019.

*The criteria used to select priorities for engagement are the following:*

- **Political relevance**, building on well-established, recently endorsed or upcoming international agreements;
- Existence of **strong and active communities and activities in GEO** focused on these challenges, with potential to deliver **tangible outcomes** within the 2017-2019 timeframe;
- Potential to **secure resources** adequate to ensure GEO to realise its vision and deliver.

### 1 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

As underlined in the GEO Strategic Plan for 2016-2025, and enshrined in the Mexico City Ministerial Declaration, GEO advocates the role of Earth observations in supporting the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the Declaration, Ministers and High Level representatives explicitly called for a GEO initiative in this field. The resulting initiative, "Earth observations in service of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", launched in 2016 and included in the 2017-2019 GEO Work Programme, is gaining momentum following the acceptance of an Implementation Plan through 2020.

Working together through this initiative, and ultimately with the other GEO initiatives, which contribute to the achievements of specific goals, engagement activities would focus on organisations with sound activities related to the SDGs, and with established GEO Members and Participating Organisations (POs).

GEO Principals and national committees will have a key role in the engagement and collaboration with user stakeholders such as national statistical offices and with ministries which already use, or would significantly benefit from using Earth observations (EO) to ensure implementation and monitoring of SDGs. Preliminary assessments have highlighted a strong potential of Earth observations, and hence GEO relevance, notably for SDGs numbered 2 ("Zero Hunger"), 3 ("Good Health and Well-being"), 6 ("Clean Water and Sanitation"), 7 ("Affordable and Clean Energy"), 11 ("Sustainable Cities and Communities"), 12 ("Sustainable Consumption and Production"), 13 ("Climate Action"), 14 ("Life Below Water") and 15 ("Life on Land").

Relevant international organisations with which to pursue or strengthen partnerships include the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Economic Commission

for Europe (UNECE) (for specific engagement in EO4EA) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank.

Additionally, as a second-level priority, GEO should maintain and strengthen links with international coordinating organisations and initiatives such as the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), the UN Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) to ensure proper alignment between their respective programmes and avoid overlaps.

Given the broad spectrum covered by the 2030 Agenda, engagement activities in 2017-2019 should preferably focus on those goals in which GEO has a strong and active community as well as tangible outputs (Initiatives, and especially Flagships). They should also align with the activities of the Global Initiative "Earth Observations in Service of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". The following SDGs are initially suggested for prioritisation:

- **SDG 2 "Zero Hunger"** (e.g.: GEOGLAM);
- **SDG 6 "Clean Water and Sanitation"** (e.g.: GEOGLOWS: GEO Global Water Sustainability, GEO Wetlands Initiative, GDIS: Global Drought Information Systems, and EO4EA);
- **SDG 11 "Sustainable Cities and Communities"** (e.g.: GEO Human Planet Initiative, GOS4M: Global Observation System for Mercury; activities here could be linked to priorities 3 and 4);
- **SDG 13 "Climate Action"** (e.g.: GFOI –linked to priority 2-, GEOCARBON, EO4EA, GEOCRI: GEO Cold Regions; activities here could be linked to priorities 2 and 3);
- **SDG 14 "Life Below Water"** (e.g.: Oceans and Society: Blue Planet, EO4EA);
- **SDG 15 "Life on Land"** (e.g.: GEO BON, GEO-ECO: GEO Global Ecosystem Initiative, and EO4EA).

Within the context of the engagement activities relevant to each SDG, a special focus should be put on supporting developing and less developed countries.

As a caveat, the above list needs to be consistent with the outcome of the analysis currently carried out by the Programme Board, with the implementation plans of the relevant Flagships and Initiatives and with the availability of resources which might require further prioritisation.

## **2 CLIMATE CHANGE - GREENHOUSE GAS MONITORING**

In the Mexico Declaration, GEO Ministers and High Level representatives confirmed the support of GEO to the implementation of the UNFCCC and the by-then upcoming Paris Agreement (COP-21). This is reflected in the GEO Strategic Plan, where climate-related actions are considered critical in addressing all GEO Societal Benefit Areas (SBAs).

In order to honour the commitments derived from COP-21, GEO can play a role in supporting stocktaking methods by provision of anthropogenic emissions data and methods, support mitigation and adaptation measures by providing geospatial data locally and support indicators and targets related to Climate in the SDGs.

Several GEO initiatives are dealing with climate monitoring, namely the Global Carbon Observation System Initiative (also known as GEOCARBON, the Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI) and GEOCRI (GEO Cold Regions Initiative). GEOCARBON aims at addressing important issues needed to build a connected and interoperable global network for carbon cycle and greenhouse gas observations. Important partners here would be the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS), the Global Carbon Project (GCP) and the UNFCCC Subsidiary Body for Scientific and

Technological Advice (SBSTA) among others. Europe can also rely on the role of the future Copernicus Climate Change Service to contribute to these efforts.

GFOI, one of the most consolidated GEO initiatives (which will be promoted to Flagship in 2017) helps nations monitor their forest and forest carbon stocks by fostering actions towards operational national forest monitoring systems (NFMS). GFOI engagement activities, bringing together in-country partners (FAO, UN-REDD, SilvaCarbon, and the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Fund), should be considered as clear priorities for the period covered by this plan.

Activities carried out under the GEOCRI (GEO Cold Regions) initiative will support the assessment of the effects of climate change in those regions (in particular in the Arctic) and elsewhere, contributing to post COP-21 actions, Sendai and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development processes.

### **3 DISASTER RISK REDUCTION**

In the Mexico Declaration, Ministers and High Level representatives explicitly affirmed the support of GEO for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030). The Strategic Plan includes Disaster Resilience as one of the eight Societal Benefit Areas. The GEO Work Programme foresees a couple of initiatives in this domain. These are: "GEO-DARMA", led by CEOS which explicitly targets the practical implementation of some critical elements of the Sendai Framework, and the GEO Geohazards Supersites and Natural Laboratories (GSNL). The latter is a truly international scientific effort, which focuses on monitoring and study selected, high-risk areas of the world, which has developed a sound Implementation Plan through 2019.

Building on these initiatives, past achievements and especially on the role of CEOS, GEO could strengthen partnerships with the relevant UN agencies and programmes, such as the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and other development banks. Engagement actions will aim at supporting the provision of timely access to EO data of relevance to the full cycle of disaster management and target the practical implementation of some critical elements of the Sendai Framework. Developing countries should be on primary focus, in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and increase their resilience to natural hazards.

### **4 RESILIENT CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**

The Third UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development will take place on 17-20 October 2016 in Quito and the New Urban Agenda will be adopted. Contributing specifically to the SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), this agenda will address the emerging urban development challenges, especially in developing and least developed countries. The role of geospatial information for improving long term integrated urban and territorial planning and the need for a shared knowledge base using globally comparable and locally generated data is recognised in the Means of Implementation in the Surabaya Draft Agenda.

Sustainable Urban Development is one of the eight GEO SBAs. Two initiatives contributing to address this challenge were included already in the 2016 GEO Work Programme: "Global Urban Observation and Information", led by the USA and with a strong presence of partners from across the world (China, DLR, and ESA), and the "Global Human Planet Initiative", led by the European Commission. The latter builds on the Global Human Settlement Layer activities providing information that can support all the spatial metrics and indicators related to population and settlements and thus contributes to several goals and targets under discussion in the post 2015 frameworks. This initiative recently held a Side Event at the Habitat III Conference on the integration of Landsat and other EO data (including Sentinel) for a proposal of SDG indicators. This initiative is also working on exchanges with the UN HABITAT and the UN Statistical Division for proposing certain variables as a

measure of Goal 11 indicators. These engagement exchanges could be further supported and strengthened.

## **5 ECOSYSTEM ACCOUNTING**

The Mexico Declaration calls on GEO to strengthen its focus on users and stakeholders and in particular develop new approaches to effectively engage with United Nations institutions, Multilateral Environmental Agreements, Multilateral Development Banks, additional Participating Organizations and the private sector. To this end, GEO's ecosystem accounting-related activities, and in particular the EO4EA (Earth Observations for Ecosystem Accounting) Global Initiative, will facilitate the development of ecosystem accounts in a more timely and accurate manner and contribute to governments' access to tools that will aid the development, planning and assessment and to inform management and policy options for those activities using or having an impact on the countries' natural capital. GEO will assist governments and others in developing ecosystem accounts utilizing the United Nations Statistical Commission's System of Environmental and Ecosystem Accounting - Experimental Ecosystem Accounts (SEEA-EEA) to support resource management and policy decisions. The practical approaches to conducting inventory and monitoring of national and sub-national ecosystem accounts will further facilitate the use of Earth observation data for monitoring and reporting of progress towards the SDGs.

## **ANNEX I**

### **2017-2019 GEO ENGAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN TEMPLATE**

The 2017-2019 GEO Engagement Implementation Plan will be a document listing major engagement actions aligned with the strategic priorities of GEO within 2017-2019. It will be compiled by the Secretariat under the guidance of the Executive Committee, following the spirit of the Engagement Strategy. The template presented in this Annex is suggested for guidance.

#### **1 SCOPE OF THE 2017-2019 GEO ENGAGEMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

This section is to provide a short overview of the scope of the multiannual implementation plan, covering the following points:

- Multi-annual engagement implementation plan focused on key engagement actions consistent with the strategic priorities identified by the Executive Committee;
- Actions aligned with GEO's strengths and capacities, based on a mapping carried out by the Programme Board;
- Actions categorised according to their contribution to the agreed three objectives of the Engagement Strategy:
  - Establishing GEO as a unique international initiative that can ensure that Earth observation (EO) underpins global environmental decision-making;
  - Ensuring strong advocacy for broad, open data policies and practices;
  - Establishing GEOSS as a global reference for Earth observation systems, data and information.
- The span of the Implementation Plan will cover the duration of the multiannual GEO Work Programme (2017-2019) to which it should be attached;
- Actions are described to allow their monitoring and evaluation (i.e. following the GEO Monitoring and Evaluation framework);
- This plan does not seek to replace or substitute existing actions, but rather to leverage those activities aligned with the priorities identified by the Executive Committee.

#### **2 CONTEXTUAL PRIORITIES**

This section is to list the priorities agreed by the Executive Committee, which will act as drivers for the key engagement actions on focus in 2017-2019.

#### **3 DESCRIPTION OF KEY ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS**

This section is to describe the key engagement actions under each Engagement Strategy objective and linked to the GEO priorities listed in Section 2.

**2.1 Establishing GEO as a unique international initiative that can ensure that Earth observation (EO) underpins global environmental decision-making** [examples below are given only for illustrative purposes]

Action	Main objectives	Target Stakeholders	GEO Engaging Actors	Timeline / Milestones	Expected Results	Key Performance Indicators
<b>Priority # 1</b>						
Participation at a COP-22 Side Event on Climate Services in Africa for Food Security.	To present GEO success story on the Crop Monitor Early Warning.	Climate and Development-related policy implementers representing the Parties.	GEO-GLAM initiative, ExCom Member X.	October 2016.	Increased Awareness among Key Decision Makers and stakeholders on the value of EO Agreements/Plans to co-design pilots to support specific objectives/actions of COP agreements.	Number of UN Agencies, bodies that become engaged in GEO activities Emerging pilots to support specific objectives/actions of COP agreements.
<b>Priority # 2</b>						
GEO User Forum on Earth observation for migration.	To discuss user needs, to present existing projects, to create synergies between programmes.	Policy makers in the field of migration, civil society organisations, UN Agencies.	GI-21 Human Plan Initiative: EC (JRC), GI-17 Global Urban Observation: Germany (DLR), ESA, US (USGS, NASA, NOAA), ExCom Member Y.	2 <sup>nd</sup> half 2017.	Increased use of data in monitoring and implementation of critical international frameworks and policy goals.	Number of international frameworks in which GEO is playing a role in providing data as part of evidence base for implementation or monitoring progress.

**2.2 Ensuring strong advocacy for broad, open data policies and practices**

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**2.3 Establishing GEOSS as a global reference for Earth observation systems, data and information**