

Draft Report
44th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 18-19 July 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chair: Stephen Volz, United States.

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

1.1 Welcome from Co-Chairs and Secretariat Director

Outcome: The Co-Chairs noted that this was the first Executive Committee meeting with Gilberto Camara as Secretariat Director and welcomed Mr. Camara to his new role.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda (Document 44.1 – for decision)

Outcome: The agenda was approved with the topics of Sessions 5 and 7 transposed.

1.3 Draft Report of the 43rd Executive Committee Meeting (Document 44.2 – for decision)

Outcome: The report of the 43rd Executive Committee Meeting was adopted as distributed.

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings (Document 43.4 – for decision)

Outcome: The Executive Committee approved the closing of all Actions from the 43rd Executive Committee meeting, with one exception. Action 43.12 (Secretariat to present the scope and timing of the Mid-Term Evaluation to Plenary for approval) remains open as it is due for the 45th Executive Committee meeting.

2 IMPLEMENTING PRIORITIES

2.1 Update on Secretariat Work Planning (Document 44.4 – for discussion)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee supported the changes to the Objectives proposed by the Secretariat, as well as the proposed indicator approach, with the following adjustments:

- The scope of Goal 4 (Engage international development agencies and multilateral development banks) should be broadened to include other organizations within the United Nations (UN) system;
- The scope of Objective 4.1 (Development organizations [Member agencies and supporting international development and multilateral development banks] collaborate with GEO) should be expanded to include use of Earth observations by the targeted organizations;
- Secretariat support to Programme Board should be strengthened by removing the parentheses from Objective 6.2 (Effective coordination of the GEO Work Programme [including support to Programme Board]);

- Consideration should be given to adding indicators to monitor regional distribution and distribution across Work Programme activities of commercial organizations (Objective 2.1) and linkages to the UN system (Objective 4.1);
- Substantive indicators should be added for Secretariat operations (Objectives 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3);
- Consideration should be given to identifying expected levels of achievement being sought for each of the indicators (i.e., targets), even if these were ranges and not specific values; and
- The Secretariat should engage the assistance of Programme Board in the collection of data from Work Programme activities.

Action 44.1: The Secretariat to provide an update on changes to the Goals, Objectives and Indicators, and on progress toward the Objectives. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

2.2 Update on Secretariat Activities (Document 44.5 – for information; Presentation by Australia)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee took note of the Secretariat Operations Report.

The Executive Committee thanked Australia for the presentation on the Digital Earth Africa project and expressed their support for the project's continued development.

Action 44.2: The Digital Earth Africa team to explore appropriate mechanisms to include Digital Earth Africa in the Work Programme, in collaboration with the Secretariat and the Programme Board. **Due: 47th Executive Committee meeting (March 2019).**

2.3 Update on Implementing Priorities (Presentation by the Secretariat)

Outcome: The Executive Committee recognized the urgent need for Secretariat capacity to support the engagement priority regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2.4 Update on Commercial Sector Engagement (Presentation by the Secretariat)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee endorsed the approach for engaging the commercial sector based on the four-part classification of entities and the commercial sector challenge. In implementing the approach, the Executive Committee encouraged the Secretariat to:

- Track the distribution of commercial sector engagement with GEO regionally, taking account of the identified categories; and
- Include both small and large commercial sector organizations in engagement activities.

Action 44.3: The Secretariat to organize a commercial sector round table discussion, in collaboration with Japan and AOGEOSS, to be held during the 46th Executive Committee meeting. The Secretariat will prepare a briefing document on the content of the Roundtable to be discussed at the 45th Executive Committee session. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting (30 October 2018).**

3 REALIZING THE VISION OF A RESULTS-ORIENTED GEOSS

3.1 Realizing the Vision of a Results-Oriented GEOSS (Document 44.6 – for decision)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee endorsed the proposed Plan of Action in Section 7 of Document 44.6, subject to the following modifications:

- The strategy document to be developed should address, in addition to the questions identified in Section 7, how the development of the GEOSS Platform into a knowledge hub can be made in connection with existing structures; and
- The process of developing the strategy document will engage the expertise of the GEO community, including the Programme Board and the GEOSS Evolve team.

Action 44.4: The Secretariat to prepare a Strategy for a Results-Oriented GEOSS following the schedule in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Schedule for Development of a Strategy for a Results-Oriented GEOSS

Task	Timing
Initial meeting of the expert group Membership in the expert group will be by invitation of the Secretariat, but will include members of Programme Board and GEOSS Evolve, as well as external members.	6-7 Sept 2018 (To be held in conjunction with the 10 th Programme Board meeting)
Draft Strategy for a Results-Oriented GEOSS to be presented to the 45 th Executive Committee meeting and at the GEO-XV Plenary meeting for discussion.	Strategy document to be distributed as part of the GEO-XV Plenary documents in early October
Comments on the draft Strategy to be received from GEO community.	By 31 December.
Second meeting of expert group.	Late January 2019 (To be held in conjunction with the 11 th Programme Board meeting)
Second version of Strategy presented to ExCom for discussion.	March
Presentation of the Strategy at the GEO Symposium. Third meeting of expert group.	May (To be held in conjunction with the 12 th Programme Board meeting)
Third version of Strategy presented to ExCom for decision	July
Proposed Strategy presented to GEO Plenary for approval	October

4 FINANCE AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

4.1 Report of the Budget Working Group (Presentation by the Chair of the Budget Working Group)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee accepted the recommendations of the Budget Working Group, specifically:

- The practice introduced in the Interim Report on Income and Expenditure at May 31, 2018 and Secretariat Staffing (Document 44.8) of including separate tables listing: 1) secondments, 2) virtual secondments and 3) targeted contributions to Foundational Tasks should be continued;
- Outreach by Budget Working Group members to selected GEO Principals to encourage contributions to the Trust Fund should be continued;
- GEO Members contributing at or above 100% of their Equitable Contribution (as per the GEO indicative scale) should be formally recognized, with the details of this recognition to be determined by the Budget Working Group in consultation with the Secretariat; and
- The proposed changes to Section 4.6 of the GEO Rules of Procedure regarding the expectation for Executive Committee members to contribute to the Trust Fund were approved for presentation to Plenary.

Action 44.5: The Secretariat to prepare a revised expenditure plan reflecting the updated list of pledged contributions. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 44.6: The Secretariat to contact representatives of the Russian Federation to clarify any remaining concerns regarding GEO's legal status. **Due: 31 July 2018.**

Action 44.7: The Secretariat to include the proposed changes to Section 4.6 in the Rules of Procedure for presentation to the GEO-XV Plenary for decision. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

4.2 2017 Financial Statements and Audit Report (Document 44.7 – for decision in advance of Plenary decision; presentation by Luckson Ngwira, Chief, Finance Division, World Meteorological Organization Secretariat)

Outcome: The Executive Committee thanked Mr Ngwira for his presentation.

4.3 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure at 31 May and Secretariat Staffing (Document 44.8 – for information)

Outcomes related to this topic are included under Agenda item 4.1.

4.4 Resource Mobilization

Outcome: The Executive Committee reaffirmed its support for the Secretariat to proceed with implementation of fundraising activities.

5 PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

5.1 Report of the Subgroup on Participating Organizations (Document 44.12 – for decision)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee concurred with the recommendations of the Subgroup, including that:

- The proposed changes to the criteria for eligibility as a Participating Organization; and
- The creation of a GEO Associate category, in which commercial sector firms, national associations of commercial sector firms, and non-governmental, not-for-profit organizations with a national or sub-national mandate would be eligible, as well as organizations eligible to become Participating Organizations but which prefer to engage as GEO Associates.

Action 44.8: The Subgroup on Participating Organizations to circulate to Executive Committee members the proposed changes to the GEO Rules of Procedure required to implement the approved recommendations. **Due: 31 July 2018.**

Executive Committee members to indicate their concurrence or non-concurrence with the proposed changes to the GEO Rules of Procedure to the Secretariat. **Due: 7 September 2018.**

Action 44.9: A new “Subgroup on Participating Organization Engagement” is established to:

1. Review current rules for participation in GEO by Participating Organizations;
2. Review recent engagement of Participating Organizations in GEO;
3. Assess results of analysis of Participating Organization engagement and propose options for improving engagement, including a possible review of Participating Organization Status; and
4. Propose changes to the Rules of Procedure, as required, to implement the Subgroup’s recommendations.

Items 1 and 2 above: **Due: 46th Executive Committee meeting** (October 2018).

Items 3 and 4 above: **Due: 47th Executive Committee meeting** (March 2019) for discussion; **Due: 48th Executive Committee** (July 2019) for decision.

5.2 Review of Requests for Participating Organization Status (Document 44.13 – for decision)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee approved the applications from the following organizations:

- Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD);
- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); and
- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA).

The Executive Committee deferred approval of the applications from the following organizations, pending a GEO-XV Plenary decision regarding the proposed GEO Associate category:

- China Association for Geographic Information Society (CAGIS); and
- Water, Environment and Human Development Initiative (WEHDI).

6 GEO WEEK 2018 AND MINISTERIAL PLANNING

6.1 GEO Week 2018 Plenary Planning – Report of the Subgroup (Document 44.10 – for discussion)

Outcome: The Executive Committee thanked Japan and the GEO Week 2018 Subgroup for their efforts in organizing GEO Week 2018 events and for their update.

Action 44.10: Plenary organizers to include recognition of the contributions of current and previous Plenary hosts during the GEO-XV Plenary. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

6.2 Ministerial 2019

Outcomes: The Executive Committee accepted the offer from Australia to host the GEO-XVI Plenary and Ministerial in 2019.

The Executive Committee endorsed the action to establish a Working Group to identify potential topics and themes for the Ministerial and to define the contents of the ministers’ package. The Ministerial Working Group will also determine the initial GEO outreach regarding

the Ministerial package, including the declaration. The call for nominations to the Ministerial Working Group will be made on 31 July with a deadline of 7 September 2018.

Executive Committee members were encouraged to begin engagement with their ministers to identify which minister will be invited to attend the Ministerial.

Action 44.11: The Secretariat and the Lead Co-Chair to prepare the terms of reference for the Ministerial Working Group. **Due: 31 July 2018.**

Action 44.12: The Secretariat to issue a call through the Executive Committee for nominations to the Ministerial Working Group. **Nominations to be received at the Secretariat by 7 September 2018.**

7 2017-2019 GEO WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 Report of the Programme Board (Document 44.9 – for information; Presentation by Ivan DeLoatch, Programme Board Co-Chair)

Outcome: The Executive Committee took note of the Programme Board report and thanked Mr DeLoatch for his presentation.

7.2 Report of the Programme Board Subgroup on Regional GEOSS (Document 44.9, Appendix 1 – for information; Presentations by Mmboneni Muofhe for AfriGEOSS, Angelica Gutierrez for AmeriGEOSS, Xingfa Gu for AOGEOSS, Gilles Ollier for EuroGEOSS, and Imraan Saloojee for the Subgroup on Regional GEOSS)

Outcome: The Executive Committee thanked the regional representatives and the Co-Chair of the Programme Board Subgroup for their presentations. The Executive Committee and Presenters discussed the myriad of characteristics of Regional GEOSS initiatives (RGIs) – from organizing frameworks, to requirements, to IT infrastructure. Ultimately, to positioning within GEO governance and Work Programme. The Executive Committee determined that as a matter of priority, the assessment should focus on the nature and purpose of RGIs, and their proper placement with GEO's organizational structure and relationships.

Action 44.13: The Subgroup on Regional GEOSS to continue its work, focusing on interactions of regional GEOs with the global GEO, including organizational connections and communications exchange, and any recommended changes to their terms and conditions required to recognize their distinct role. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

8 REVIEW OF SESSION OUTCOMES AND ACTION ITEMS

8.1 Any Other Business

Outcomes: The Executive Committee decided to retain the current schedule of four meetings per year through 2019. The question of the number of Executive Committee meetings would be revisited after the Ministerial.

The Executive Committee expressed interest in conducting a 360-degree assessment using the previously established tool.

Action 44.14: The Secretariat to propose an approach for implementing a 360-degree assessment. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

8.2 Review of Action Items

The Executive Committee reviewed and approved the Outcomes and Action Items from the meeting.

8.3 Closing Remarks

The Co-Chairs thanked all participants and thanked the Lead Co-Chair for a well-managed meeting.

Draft Report
44 Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 18-19 July 2018

FULL REPORT**Wednesday, 18 July 2018***Meeting convened at 10:30*

Chair: Stephen Volz, United States.

1 GENERAL BUSINESS**1.1 Welcome from Co-Chairs and Secretariat Director**

The Lead Co-Chair welcomed Executive Committee Members, Observers and the Secretariat, noting the new leadership in the Secretariat Director role with Gilberto Camara. Mr Volz noted that GEO faces an active period ahead in the near term, including new approaches being introduced to GEO by the Secretariat Director. He observed that this transition was a good time to evaluate performance, systems and processes across GEO. Mr Volz also reflected on his experiences in working with the Secretariat, noting that there was good openness to suggestions from both sides, indicating an ability of the team to evolve and adapt to new challenges. GEO has always looked ahead to next steps and that he expected active discussions where all ideas and positions would be welcome.

Patrick Child, European Commission Co-Chair, wished Mr Camara success in his new mandate. He noted that this was his first Executive Committee meeting following recent changes in the Commission where he replaced Robert-Jan Smits. Mr Child stated that the European Commission was committed to supporting GEO and its work and was fully supportive of projecting an active and results-oriented agenda for GEO. He noted that he has had previous experience with other organizations that operate in a voluntary context similar to GEO and that the Vision paper provided some productive ideas to work on. Mr Child observed that the European contribution to GEO is strong, including the Copernicus programme and EuroGEOSS. He stated that he thought it was also good to discuss the Trust Fund, as the Commission is a major contributor and is interested in ensuring GEO's financial viability. The Strategic Plan in 2015 set a strong basis to build, with emphasis on moving forward with established systems, but GEO needs to show concrete results for the user community.

Mmboneni Muofhe, South Africa Co-Chair, thanked the Lead Co-Chair for his work behind the scenes in preparing for the meeting and welcomed Mr Camara as Secretariat Director. He stated that South Africa is committed to support the work of GEO and is working with AfriGEOSS to raise awareness within African countries. He noted the recent success of the AfriGEOSS Symposium in Gabon and said that it was likely that GEO would be welcoming new Members from Africa soon. South Africa looks forward to welcoming new activities, notably Digital Earth Africa, and is poised to ensure that the GEO Vision grows stronger in the African continent and globally.

Pengde Li, on behalf of the China Co-Chair, expressed his confidence that Mr Camara would support GEO well and would bring GEO to the next stage of its development. He noted that this is a period of transition in China, with reorganizations and mergers of ministries. China is now in the process of

integrating Earth observation satellites under a single team located in the Ministry of Natural Resources. Mr Li drew attention to the recent AOGEOSS international congress that was held in China in May of 2018 and to a pilot project that will be launched in the Mekong River basin. He also observed that GEO Week 2018 will be the most important GEO activity in the region this year and that planning for this event was going smoothly. Mr Li reminded Executive Committee members that China will host the first United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress in Deqing in November of this year, noting that the Secretariat Director will address the Congress.

Gilberto Camara, Secretariat Director, thanked Executive Committee members for their support, especially the Co-Chairs. He also thanked Barbara Ryan for her efforts in ensuring a smooth transition, noting that it was helpful to have the one-month overlap of Directors. Mr Camara stated that he had been briefed by the Secretariat in a professional manner, found the secretariat staff to be positive and was impressed with their quality and dedication. He reflected on his experience in Earth observations and his long involvement with GEO back to the earliest days. GEO is an organization that is technical and objective, mandated and responsible to Member states, but subject to rational decision making. Given the depth of his experience, he brings personal expectations for how GEO should develop, but also understands the need to temper these expectations with the diverse perspectives within the GEO community. He looked forward to discuss these ideas with others.

Outcome: The Co-Chairs noted that this was the first Executive Committee meeting with Gilberto Camara as Secretariat Director and welcomed Mr. Camara to his new role.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda (Document 44.1 – for decision)

To accommodate presentations on the regional GEOSS from remote locations, the Lead Co-Chair proposed that the Report of the Subgroup on Participating Organizations and the Review of Requests for Participating Organization Status be moved to Session 5 and the Report of the Programme Board and the Report of the Programme Board Subgroup on Regional GEOSS be moved to Session 7.

Outcome: The agenda was approved with the topics of Sessions 5 and 7 transposed.

1.3 Draft Report of the 43rd Executive Committee Meeting (Document 44.2 – for decision)

Outcome: The report of the 43rd Executive Committee Meeting was adopted as distributed.

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings (Document 43.4 – for decision)

Outcome: The Executive Committee approved the closing of all Actions from the 43rd Executive Committee meeting, with one exception. Action 43.12 (Secretariat to present the scope and timing of the Mid-Term Evaluation to Plenary for approval) remains open as it is due for the 45th Executive Committee meeting.

2 IMPLEMENTING PRIORITIES

2.1 Update on Secretariat Work Planning (Document 44.4 – for discussion)

Craig Larlee, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in the Secretariat, gave a brief presentation summarizing the direction given by Executive Committee at its 43rd meeting and the Secretariat response. He noted that some Objectives, notably those under Goal 1, were not yet at a stage where it was possible to identify quantitative indicators, but that this may become feasible as the process continues. More work is also needed to define GEO's strategy with respect to development organizations. Mr Larlee stated that the planning and reporting process is a learning process for both the Secretariat and for Executive Committee and that experimentation should be expected. He also noted that some data quality issues limit the use of quantitative indicators in some areas.

The European Commission welcomed the systematic work on planning and tracking progress and viewed it as a step in the right direction. It also welcomed the reduction in the number of Objectives.

South Africa thanked the Secretariat for the work thus far, but observed areas where further work was needed. The formulation of Objective 4.1 was too vague and should include use of Earth observations for their own purposes. In Objective 6.2, the parentheses should be removed to make the role of support to Programme Board clearer. In Objective 2.1, there should also be an indicator of the distribution of commercial sector entities across regions.

The United Kingdom stated their support for the smaller number of Objectives. It was unclear, however, whether the indicators captured the GEO that was expected. It was proposed that the issue be revisited following the discussion in Session 3. It was also suggested that the indicators would be more useful if the expected change to be observed in the indicator values be identified, even if this was only a range or order of magnitude.

Germany agreed that the proposal was a step in the right direction. Indicators for the Secretariat operations Objectives would also be desirable, for example, timeliness of distribution of documents for Plenary, Executive Committee and Programme Board meetings.

The United States suggested that the indicators for Objective 2.1 should include the breadth of contributions of commercial sector organizations across the Work Programme, including how many activities were implicated. The Work Programme activities should be “mined” for this content, which would require a role for the Programme Board in encouraging the activities to provide these data.

The Secretariat Director noted that it may be useful to expand Goal 4 to also include UN agencies such as the World Health Organization, with the intent being to enable them to use Earth observation information in their work.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee supported the changes to the Objectives proposed by the Secretariat, as well as the proposed indicator approach, with the following adjustments:

- The scope of Goal 4 (Engage international development agencies and multilateral development banks) should be broadened to include other organizations within the United Nations (UN) system;
- The scope of Objective 4.1 (Development organizations [Member agencies and supporting international development and multilateral development banks] collaborate with GEO) should be expanded to include use of Earth observations by the targeted organizations;
- Secretariat support to Programme Board should be strengthened by removing the parentheses from Objective 6.2 (Effective coordination of the GEO Work Programme [including support to Programme Board]);
- Consideration should be given to adding indicators to monitor regional distribution and distribution across Work Programme activities of commercial organizations (Objective 2.1) and linkages to the UN system (Objective 4.1);
- Substantive indicators should be added for Secretariat operations (Objectives 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3);
- Consideration should be given to identifying expected levels of achievement being sought for each of the indicators (i.e., targets), even if these were ranges and not specific values; and
- The Secretariat should engage the assistance of Programme Board in the collection of data from Work Programme activities.

Action 44.1: The Secretariat to provide an update on changes to the Goals, Objectives and Indicators, and on progress toward the Objectives. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

2.2 Update on Secretariat Activities (Document 44.5 – for information; Presentation by Australia)

Craig Larlee presented the Report on the update on Secretariat Activities. This report was structured to align to the Executive Committee Goals and Objectives. This Secretariat Operations Report is the first such report whose content has been derived from the internal Secretariat Work Planning and Reporting tool. Reporting on past missions and the forecast of future missions are included in the annexes. The Lead Co-Chair asked if there were questions or comments regarding the Secretariat Operations Report; none were raised.

Stuart Minchin (Australia) then gave a presentation on the Digital Earth Africa project. This project is intended to address needs expressed by many countries in Africa for better access and capacity for applying Earth observation data to national priorities, in relation to national development objectives and the 2030 Agenda. Digital Earth Africa will provide an operational data infrastructure deployable in the cloud or locally that gives the government control over its management. The project will support a multi-stakeholder and data ecosystem approach.

Digital Earth Africa is based on the Open Data Cube technology developed by Australia and the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS). It will be owned and operated by Africa for Africa based on local needs and priorities. Developing the institutional model will require further engagement with key stakeholders.

South Africa thanked Australia for this very good initiative. It was noted that there has been engagement with South Africa and that they are very supportive. South Africa observed that there must be deep ownership and participation by African countries in Digital Earth Africa and that there was a need to work with other existing initiatives that are developing data cubes in Africa. AfriGEOSS was suggested as a useful mechanism to further Digital Earth Africa, as it is important that it does not lose connection with GEO. It was recommended that some of the resources for Phase 2 be raised within Africa itself, even though these are likely to be relatively small at first.

The European Commission asked who the users of Digital Earth Africa would be and whether they were intermediaries, as well as whether there would be interaction with Copernicus.

Germany stated that they had earlier asked for more information because the German international development agency (GIZ) has a need for more Earth observation information to support their work. Germany also stated that they could contribute to this initiative, both independently and through Copernicus. It was also noted that there are many activities ongoing in Africa and that there is a role for GEO in helping to bring these activities together. Germany also asked for clarification of the role of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in the project.

Finland observed that this project offered an opportunity for GEO to engage with the African Union. Finland also indicated their willingness to help, based on their existing contacts in Africa, for example, in weather services.

The United States asked whether there would be potential to use higher resolution data sets and other data from commercial providers.

Mr Minchin responded that the project leads are aiming for intermediaries as the primary users, but that they are also working with partners, e.g. a consultative group on agricultural research, to reach end users. The project may also involve commercial firms in some aspects. In Digital Earth Australia, there are strong links with Copernicus and so there is potential to do something similar in Africa. However, Mr Minchin stated that they did not want to prejudge the institutional issues in Africa and that these matters would be for Africans to decide. Regarding the role of the WEF, it is contributing time and use of its networks to enable conversations at high political levels. They have been very active in supporting progress on this activity, which is building a strong relationship between GEO and WEF. Regarding the role of commercial providers, Mr Minchin noted that there was active development in Digital Earth Australia to make the database available to commercial providers. There

is no intent to include pay-for-use data in the implementation of Digital Earth Africa, although this may be added by others in the context of their use. It was also noted that Digital Earth Africa would offer free and open products based on free and open data. Companies can then offer other products built on the free data.

IEEE noted that they are involved with the Smart Africa Alliance, working on information and communications technologies (ICT). They are looking to converge this work on ICT with satellite data and applications.

The Secretariat Director stated that he sees data cubes as a major way forward in making Earth observations data usable. The Secretariat is looking to actively support work to make data available to users and is committed to support the Digital Earth Africa initiative. He also expressed his hope that other initiatives of this kind will come forward. He noted that support will be strongest for those initiatives that abide by the GEO principles on free and open data. These initiatives should aim to bring data together, not just make data from a single satellite available; there is a need to ensure that one country's data works with others. As such the Secretariat proposes that the data aggregation be a Foundational Task within GEO, not just for Africa, but the same would apply to other regions.

South Africa said that there was a need to recognize that a key added value of Digital Earth Africa is the building of infrastructure in Africa. South Africa agreed that it is important for the Secretariat to engage in continental programs like Digital Earth Africa, though not necessarily in national data cubes. It was also noted that initiatives like Digital Earth Africa need to ensure that Member states are fully engaged.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee took note of the Secretariat Operations Report.

The Executive Committee thanked Australia for the presentation on the Digital Earth Africa project and expressed their support for the project's continued development.

Action 44.2: The Digital Earth Africa team to explore appropriate mechanisms to include Digital Earth Africa in the Work Programme, in collaboration with the Secretariat and the Programme Board.

Due: 47th Executive Committee meeting (March 2019).

2.3 Update on Implementing Priorities (Presentation by the Secretariat)

Steven Ramage, Senior Manager of External Relations in the GEO Secretariat, provided a brief update on implementation of the GEO engagement priorities. Mr Ramage requested that Members support GEO's forthcoming application for Observer status with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This status would enable GEO to officially participate in the 25th Conference of the Parties (COP25). Additional Member support was also requested for COP24, where GEO is planning a side event at the meeting in Poland in November 2018. Turning to the Sendai Framework, Mr Ramage reminded Executive Committee that GEO has been selected to provide a paper for the Global Assessment Report 2019, for which there is a deadline for contributions of 7 August 2018. Members were asked to contact him if they wish to provide input to this paper. On the UN Agenda 2030, Mr Ramage noted that there is currently no dedicated staff resource at the Secretariat to support this priority.

The Secretariat Director underlined the importance of staffing a position to work on SDGs, either a staff position within the Secretariat or a qualified secondment.

Australia noted that the UN-GGIM partnered with several GEO Members and the GPSDD to hold a side event at the high-level meeting held recently at UN headquarters in New York City. This event was important for showcasing the importance of Earth observations to the achievement of the SDGs and to measurement of progress towards them.

Germany indicated that they would support GEO at COP24.

The European Commission stated that the SDG staffing issue highlights the challenge in ensuring that Trust Fund resources are used toward the highest priorities. It was noted that the Commission is very active on SDGs and can assist GEO on this.

The United States agreed that prioritization within the Secretariat is needed with respect to resources and hiring. It was observed that this also implies that some other areas may not be addressed, the implications of which will need to be made clear to Executive Committee.

The Secretariat Director agreed that prioritization is necessary and that GEO must reduce its ambitions in some areas. For example, it may be necessary to trim some of the Objectives. The Director noted that the Secretariat is currently critically understaffed and it cannot transfer existing staff to SDGs since all current staff are filling essential roles. It is also important that the SDG position be filled by someone with the appropriate background on SDGs, statistics, human/social sciences, as well as knowledge of Earth observations.

The United States offered a caution that the Secretariat not define the requirements so stringently that the post cannot be filled.

Outcome: The Executive Committee recognized the urgent need for Secretariat capacity to support the engagement priority regarding the SDGs.

2.4 Update on Commercial Sector Engagement (Presentation by the Secretariat)

Steven Ramage provided a brief presentation regarding a proposed refinement to the GEO commercial sector strategy. He noted that, based on feedback from various symposia and meetings, commercial sector organizations are still unsure of how they can engage with GEO. The Secretariat intends to provide more information on commercial sector engagement, based on the Rules of Engagement that were approved at the GEO-XIV Plenary, on the GEO website. The Secretariat is also proposing to use a four-part categorization of commercial sector organizations that are important in Earth observations; the four categories being: 1) Cloud Services, 2) Data Providers, 3) Software Developers, and 4) Service Providers. While he noted that there is a degree of overlap between these categories, this approach will allow for a better customization of how GEO will approach firms in each category. It was also noted that this would also support the “Challenge” process that is being developed by the Secretariat as the next element in the commercial sector strategy.

The European Commission stated that they appreciated this item and that it was important to have transparency on what the Secretariat is doing in working with the commercial sector. The Commission believes it is important to bring this topic to Plenary, and that GEO should include in its engagement not only those firms that are best resourced, but also small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), who often have much to contribute to GEO.

The United States confirmed that they had also heard from commercial sector organizations that it is not clear how they can engage in the Work Programme. The session during the Executive Committee meeting following the GEO-XV Plenary would be an opportunity to address this.

The United Kingdom stated that they support and encourage commercial sector engagement and the four-part structure that was presented. It also supported engagement of SMEs. More clarity on how this will work was requested, however.

The Secretariat Director agreed that SMEs are important, as not all innovation comes from the big players. However, SMEs often underestimate the gaps between their capabilities and those of the big players. Members can play a role in helping the Secretariat reach commercial sector organizations in their countries. While SMEs have the ability to adapt quickly and fill needs, GEO has a role in informing them of the opportunities from GEO’s perspective.

Finland stated that GEO needs to understand the new space sector (small satellites). It was also noted that the commercial sector may wish to use GEO to gain visibility, for example, in making data

publically available. Finland also cautioned that companies may not fit entirely within one of the four sectors and their placement may even vary based on market conditions.

IEEE suggested that the Secretariat look to the European Space Agency as a model for their involvement of the commercial sector.

The United States reminded Executive Committee that the essence of GEO is not the technology, but the integration of various elements together to result in applications that serve users. GEO should demand performance but be agnostic on the means through which this will be achieved.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee endorsed the approach for engaging the commercial sector based on the four-part classification of entities and the commercial sector challenge. In implementing the approach, the Executive Committee encouraged the Secretariat to:

- Track the distribution of commercial sector engagement with GEO regionally, taking account of the identified categories; and
- Include both small and large commercial sector organizations in engagement activities.

Action 44.3: The Secretariat to organize a commercial sector round table discussion, in collaboration with Japan and AOGEOSS, to be held during the 46th Executive Committee meeting. The Secretariat will prepare a briefing document on the content of the Roundtable to be discussed at the 45th Executive Committee session. Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting (30 October 2018).

3 REALIZING THE VISION OF A RESULTS-ORIENTED GEOSS

3.1 Realizing the Vision of a Results-Oriented GEOSS (Document 44.6 – for decision)

The Secretariat Director introduced the item by noting that the vision presented in the document is very similar to what was termed the “platinum option” or “Level 2” in Executive Committee Document 34.09 (July 2015). At that time, it was recognized that to support user needs GEO must provide not only analysis-ready data, but also link these data to “documented models, processes, and workflows and processing them, for example, in high-performance computing environments, to derive custom-made but reproducible information products in line with the current vision of Open Science”.

While this vision was viewed to be too ambitious in 2015, rapid changes in technologies are pushing GEO to respond. Data are now easily available; the question now is how to use these data. Big data fundamentally changes the paradigm because it is no longer possible for users to download the data. New players – data-aggregators – have entered the picture. Data aggregators bring together multi-platform data (i.e. from multiple satellites) and many provide cloud architectures so that users can upload their own data. The need for reproducible data paradoxically means that the more satellite data you have, the more important in-situ data becomes to calibrate and validate the models. GEO should thus not only look at supporting the community with cloud architectures, but also on improving in-situ data. The new GEO landscape also involves heightened expectations of users. Users want to be able to search using full text, not just keywords.

Mr Camara also stated that GEO must identify and assist those Work Programme activities, that are already at an appropriate level of maturity, in moving to the pre-operational stage where they will have usable products and services. The challenge is in moving innovations developed by researchers up to scalable services. Researchers are not well-placed to do this. The Secretariat proposes to seek funding, outside of Member contributions, to support projects of finite duration that will achieve specific, identified results. These projects will be identified in collaboration with the Programme Board. It is important for GEO to focus on developing robust, reproducible results, since the difficulty faced by many decision makers is knowing which results they can trust.

Japan requested an explanation of the role of the proposed Scientific Advisory Committee and how this would be different from the Programme Board.

South Africa noted that the move to platinum status has been in the works for a while. It was also observed that while GEO may not have all of the required expertise, existing structures can assist in many respects.

Australia stated that it was difficult to disagree with the vision, as it is something that has been discussed within GEO for a long time. The question is about the speed with which GEO can achieve it. Digital Earth Australia is an example of platinum delivery: it has created an “ecosystem” of technology and services that work together as a package. Experience has shown that this is effective in engaging users. Having operational services has also led to much greater feedback from users and has created a virtuous circle of improvement to the services themselves. Australia applauded the proposed direction and noted that, while GEO has been heading in this direction for some time, it may be a good time to accelerate this process.

The European Community expressed sympathy with the vision, but was unclear about what Executive Committee was being asked to approve. If approval was being sought for the list of questions, then it was suggested that a further question be added to Section 7 regarding whether GEO’s current structures are sufficient to allow to achieve the objectives. The European Commission also noted that our focus on users should extend beyond the research community and towards the decision-makers. The Commission also was sympathetic to the benefit of greater input from the scientific community. Appreciation was also expressed for the pragmatism of the Secretariat with regard to modifications to the proposal.

Finland stated that it agreed with the analysis, noting that many of these activities were already underway. Finland supported linking to the community of data scientists specializing in Earth observations, as these were the people developing the “recipes” (algorithms, methods, etc.) for making use of Earth observations data. Improving searches is also important for advancing the vision and enabling users to know how to identify the robust “recipes” is a good role for GEO to play.

The United Kingdom supported the vision, but suggested that moving towards the “platinum” version sooner than was envisioned raised the question if this was shift was timely or if we were moving too fast. Several questions were also asked concerning the structural changes that might be required in the Secretariat and whether any diversion of resources might be required. The UK also raised the question about how the news regarding this would be communicated to GEO community. The implications for GEO Flagships were also sought.

The United States asked who would be involved in carrying out the Plan of Action.

The Secretariat Director stated that the Plan of Action was intended as a Secretariat action, assisted by experts inside and outside of the GEO community. It would develop a strategy for how to make best use of the transformative technologies that have emerged in recent years. Programme Board will be invited to take part, but the scientific leadership will be from the Secretariat. In response to the question from Japan, the Director noted that the proposal regarding the Scientific Advisory Committee has been withdrawn by the Secretariat. The Director also remarked that these changes were not about being ahead of time, but are a matter of survival for GEO. The rapid uptake of digital open data cubes is an example of why GEO needs to move quickly.

Australia reminded Executive Committee that GEO Secretariat was always a facilitator for efforts by Members and Participating Organizations. While it is important that the Secretariat prod the GEO community to enable faster development toward the platinum solution, much of the required expertise already exists within the community. It is essential that those experts be engaged in the review process and the development of the solution and not risk alienating the community.

Finland noted that EuroGEOSS has an activity that is calling for several elements identified in the vision. Exploitation platforms are emerging, some of which are aiming to become knowledge hubs.

South Africa noted that moving quickly toward the platinum solution has several implications for how GEO operates. Programme Board should have an equally important role in realizing the new vision.

CEOS observed that in the course of working with about forty countries around the world on data cubes, they noted that many countries prefer to retain their data within their country rather than using cloud-based platforms and such sensitivities are worth bearing in mind

The Lead Co-Chair agreed that there is a large community of expertise already in GEO that should be engaged. There should also be opportunity for formal response from the community to the strategy that is brought forward. It is vital that the vision be embraced by the GEO community broadly and that they are involved in its development.

Outcome: The Executive Committee endorsed the proposed Plan of Action in Section 7 of Document 44.6, subject to the following modifications:

- The strategy document to be developed should address, in addition to the questions identified in Section 7, how the development of the GEOSS Platform into a knowledge hub can be made in connection with existing structures; and
- The process of developing the strategy document will engage the expertise of the GEO community, including the Programme Board and the GEOSS Evolve team.

Action 44.4: The Secretariat to prepare a Strategy for a Results-Oriented GEOSS following the schedule in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Schedule for Development of a Strategy for a Results-Oriented GEOSS

Task	Timing
Initial meeting of the expert group Membership in the expert group will be by invitation of the Secretariat, but will include members of Programme Board and GEOSS Evolve, as well as external members.	6-7 Sept 2018 (To be held in conjunction with the 10 th Programme Board meeting)
Draft Strategy for a Results-Oriented GEOSS to be presented to the 45 th Executive Committee meeting and at the GEO-XV Plenary meeting for discussion.	Strategy document to be distributed as part of the GEO-XV Plenary documents in early October
Comments on the draft Strategy to be received from GEO community.	By 31 December.
Second meeting of expert group.	Late January 2019 (To be held in conjunction with the 11 th Programme Board meeting)
Second version of Strategy presented to ExCom for discussion.	March
Presentation of the Strategy at the GEO Symposium. Third meeting of expert group.	May (To be held in conjunction with the 12 th Programme Board meeting)
Third version of Strategy presented to ExCom for decision	July
Proposed Strategy presented to GEO Plenary for approval	October

4 FINANCE AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

4.1 Report of the Budget Working Group (Presentation by the Chair of the Budget Working Group)

Stuart Minchin (Australia) presented the Report on behalf of the Budget Working Group. He drew attention to the Audit Report which was positive and unqualified (meaning there were no issues). It was noted that staff costs were higher, largely due to the overlap of the outgoing and incoming Directors and the related relocation costs. There was also an increase in the long-term liabilities. Mr Minchin emphasized the importance of ensuring sustained contributions to the Trust Fund. On a positive note, he observed that significant increases in contributions were received into the Trust Fund between May 31 when Document 44.8 was distributed and July 13. Mr Minchin highlighted new tables which were added to the Interim Report on Income and Expenditure to recognize extra-budgetary contributions to the Secretariat and to Foundational Tasks. He noted that it was important to draw a clear distinction between these types of contributions, which support activities, which would otherwise need to be funded from the Trust Fund, and contributions to Work Programme activities more generally.

Mr Minchin also discussed efforts by the Budget Working Group to encourage additional contributions to the Trust Fund by GEO Members, including direct contact with Principals. He noted that this approach had yielded contributions from Norway and Vietnam. The Working Group recommended a goal of increasing the number of Members contributing at 50% or more of their Equitable Contribution.

The United States announced that it would increase its pledge for 2018 by 500,000 USD, which is 104% of its Equitable Contribution. It was intended that this would be a sustained level for future years. It also requested that the Secretariat prepare a revised expenditure plan, which would reflect this and other recent contributions.

The Russian Federation noted that its practice was to make contributions only to recognized international bodies with legal status. Uncertainty about GEO's legal status made it difficult to make contributions to the Trust Fund, although the Russian Federation would continue to look for opportunities to contribute to Work Programme activities. It was also noted that the Russian Federation hosted the GEO-XIII Plenary at a considerable expense.

Australia responded that GEO does have a legal status and proposed that the Secretariat work with the Russian Federation to clarify any remaining concerns.

The Secretariat Director confirmed receipt of a letter from the Russian Federation Principal regarding their concerns.

China stated that it did not believe that the use of the UN scale was appropriate given that GEO is not a UN organization. Use of such a scale does not account for Participating Organizations. GEO should focus on increasing the number of Members that contribute to the Trust Fund rather than on those Members that are already contributing.

Mr Minchin stated that the Budget Working Group agrees that GEO needs to seek additional contributors, but that Executive Committee members should also show leadership. He also noted that the Budget Working Group proposed three options for recognizing Members that contribute at or above 100% of their Equitable Contribution. As well, the Budget Working Group proposed a change to the Rules of Procedure regarding Executive Committee expectations regarding contributions to the Trust Fund. While the wording is still soft enough to accommodate Members who may need more time to contribute, the Budget Working Group recommends that Co-Chairs lead a conversation within their caucuses about this issue at the time of Executive Committee nominations. Mr Minchin also noted that Andrea Tilche would be retiring and thus nominations to the Budget Working Group were requested.

The European Commission thanked the Budget Working Group and noted the progress achieved in recognizing non-financial contributions. Sympathy was expressed for the position of China regarding non-contributing Members, noting that the table of contributions does not include the many Members who do not contribute at all to the Trust Fund and are thus at zero percent of their Equitable Contribution. It was also noted that the European Commission contribution comes from the 23 member countries of the European Union.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee accepted the recommendations of the Budget Working Group, specifically:

- The practice introduced in the Interim Report on Income and Expenditure at May 31, 2018 and Secretariat Staffing (Document 44.8) of including separate tables listing: 1) secondments, 2) virtual secondments and 3) targeted contributions to Foundational Tasks should be continued;
- Outreach by Budget Working Group members to selected GEO Principals to encourage contributions to the Trust Fund should be continued;
- GEO Members contributing at or above 100% of their Equitable Contribution (as per the GEO indicative scale) should be formally recognized, with the details of this recognition to be determined by the Budget Working Group in consultation with the Secretariat; and
- The proposed changes to Section 4.6 of the GEO Rules of Procedure regarding the expectation for Executive Committee members to contribute to the Trust Fund were approved for presentation to Plenary.

Action 44.5: The Secretariat to prepare a revised expenditure plan reflecting the updated list of pledged contributions. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

Action 44.6: The Secretariat to contact representatives of the Russian Federation to clarify any remaining concerns regarding GEO's legal status. **Due: 31 July 2018.**

Action 44.7: The Secretariat to include the proposed changes to Section 4.6 in the Rules of Procedure for presentation to the GEO-XV Plenary for decision. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

4.2 2017 Financial Statements and Audit Report (Document 44.7 – for decision in advance of Plenary decision; presentation by Luckson Ngwira, Chief, Finance Division, World Meteorological Organization Secretariat)

Luckson Ngwira provided additional explanations to Executive Committee members regarding the 2017 Financial Statements and the Audit Report. Mr Ngwira noted that GEO's net assets were 12.7% lower at the end of the year as compared the beginning of 2017 due to an operating deficit of 294 K CHF and an actuarial loss of 30 K CHF. Despite this reduction, total assets covered all GEO liabilities, as well as about five months of operating costs. Liability for long-term employee benefits increased during 2017 by 14.7%.

The United States asked about the impact of not being able to quantify in-kind contributions, as is done for secondments.

Mr Ngwira responded that unquantified in-kind contributions cannot be included in the financial statements but that it can be noted that they were received.

The European Commission observed that the presentation provided a clear and valuable explanation of GEO's liabilities and wondered whether this information could be included in the regular reports.

Patricia Geddes, Senior Administrative Manager in the Secretariat, noted that this information is included in the annual Financial Statements, which are audited. It is difficult to provide similar information in-year since the liabilities are determined in conjunction with the auditors.

Outcome: The Executive Committee thanked Mr Ngwira for his presentation.

4.3 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure at 31 May and Secretariat Staffing (Document 44.8 – for information)

The discussion and outcomes related to this topic were included under Agenda item 4.1.

4.4 Resource Mobilization

The Secretariat Director introduced the item by stating that the Secretariat was seeking guidance from Executive Committee on how the Secretariat should approach Participating Organizations regarding contributions to the Trust Fund.

Australia stated that the Working Group had discussed this issue and noted that some Participating Organizations were already making voluntary contributions and that GEO should continue to welcome these. However, since GEO is an intergovernmental organization, Member states should be primarily responsible for funding Secretariat operations. He noted that there was never significant support within GEO for requiring contributions from Participating Organizations. The Subgroup on Participating Organizations also looked into this issue, which is dealt with to some extent in their report.

Finland observed that it would be difficult to identify an appropriate level of contribution from Participating Organizations given their diversity. Finland recommended not specifying an amount.

CEOS asked why Vietnam had decided to make a contribution recently. Was the value proposition clear to them?

Virginia Burkett (United States member of the Budget Working Group) responded that the Secretariat had prepared a document in support of the contact with Vietnam that mentioned existing contributions to the Work Programme and how these aligned with Vietnamese priorities. Ultimately, however, direct outreach was key.

The Lead Co-Chair observed that knowledge of existing contributions of Members to the Work Programme was helpful to these efforts.

The Secretariat Director indicated that the Secretariat would continue to reach out to Participating Organizations without mentioning any specific expectation of a contribution amount to the Trust Fund. Secretariat outreach with Members will also continue, although this may require some additional travel and thus some expenditures.

Outcome: The Executive Committee reaffirmed its support for the Secretariat to proceed with implementation of fundraising activities.

Meeting adjourned at 17:23

Thursday, 19 July 2018

Meeting reconvened at 09:00

5 PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

5.1 Report of the Subgroup on Participating Organizations (Document 44.12 – for decision)

Craig Larlee from the Secretariat presented the report on behalf of the Subgroup. He began by reminding Executive Committee members of the mandate they had given to the Subgroup: 1) to explore modifications to the Participating Organization eligibility criteria, 2) to identify options for a new category of affiliated organization, and 3) to examine the potential for a membership fee or other contribution to the Trust Fund from Participating Organizations and/or affiliated organizations. On the first item, the Subgroup proposed specific wording changes to the key section of the Rules of Procedure in which the eligibility criteria are described. These changes would clarify the requirement that Participating Organizations must have an international (either global or regional) mandate and scope of operations. Regarding the second item, the Subgroup recommended the creation of a new category of organizational affiliation with GEO, to be called “GEO Associates”. There were two options for the scope of this category: Option 1 to include only commercial sector firms and national associations of commercial sector firms; Option 2 to include those in option 1 plus non-governmental, not-for-profit organizations with a national or sub-national mandate or scope. For the third item, the Subgroup recommended that no mandatory membership fee be imposed on Participating Organizations, although voluntary contributions should continue to be encouraged, and that consideration could be given to charging fees for particular services.

Germany agreed with the first proposal on the criteria and supported Option 2 for the GEO Associate category, but suggested that GEO Associates not be able to make official statements at Plenary. It was also recommended that GEO Principals be advised on Associate applications from companies in their country.

Japan agreed with the change to the Rules of Procedure and also agreed with Option 2. A recommendation was requested on how to reduce the burden on the Secretariat of reviewing applications. Japan also requested that the contributions from Participating Organizations be reported.

South Africa agreed with the proposed changes and supported Option 2.

Australia noted that the Subgroup recommended that Associates be able to make interventions from the floor on non-decisional items only and that official statements would be in writing, not verbal.

The Secretariat Director asked whether the criteria for accepting Associates would include whether they would make a significant contribution to GEO.

Australia responded that while this was discussed, the Subgroup was unable to reach consensus on this issue regarding Participating Organizations. With regard to Associates, GEO is seeking to engage a broader community, especially users, and so a criterion of contribution may exclude these organizations.

The United States noted that the application form for Participating Organizations includes a request to identify the applicant’s proposed contribution to GEO, although perhaps the Secretariat and Executive Committee need to be more rigorous in their review of this information. Non-contribution by Participating Organizations still needs to be addressed and if the Executive Committee is concerned with this issue, the Subgroup should be given a mandate to consider it.

China suggested that GEO learn from the UN-GGIM, which has a Private Sector Network and an Academic Network. GEO should remain clearly an intergovernmental organization and pay more attention to Member states. There are too many Participating Organizations, many of which are not

actively involved. China agreed with the new category for GEO Associate and recommended that some Participating Organizations should move to the new category if they are not international or are not active. Members should nominate which companies should be accepted as Associates and should not apply directly to the Secretariat.

South Africa observed that the proposal before Executive Committee deals with how to handle applications received and how to categorize them. There is a separate discussion about how to deal with inactive Participating Organizations. If there is not a process for reviewing Participating Organizations, should we set one up?

The European Commission stated that they concurred with the proposal from South Africa to conduct a review of Participating Organizations.

Australia remarked that it should be the responsibility of GEO to find out why Participating Organizations are not engaging and work to address their concerns and challenges to bring about better engagement. GEO benefits from engagement of Participating Organizations and needs to understand if and why engagement is not happening.

Finland agreed with Australia and said that more work is needed to understand what is not happening. The focus of the review should be on positive engagement; there is no harm in keeping names on a list.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee concurred with the recommendations of the Subgroup, including that:

- The proposed changes to the criteria for eligibility as a Participating Organization; and
- The creation of a GEO Associate category, in which commercial sector firms, national associations of commercial sector firms, and non-governmental, not-for-profit organizations with a national or sub-national mandate would be eligible, as well as organizations eligible to become Participating Organizations but which prefer to engage as GEO Associates.

Action 44.8: The Subgroup on Participating Organizations to circulate to Executive Committee members the proposed changes to the GEO Rules of Procedure required to implement the approved recommendations. **Due: 31 July 2018.**

Executive Committee members to indicate their concurrence or non-concurrence with the proposed changes to the GEO Rules of Procedure to the Secretariat. **Due: 7 September 2018.**

Action 44.9: A new “Subgroup on Participating Organization Engagement” is established to:

1. Review current rules for participation in GEO by Participating Organizations;
2. Review recent engagement of Participating Organizations in GEO;
3. Assess results of analysis of Participating Organization engagement and propose options for improving engagement, including a possible review of Participating Organization Status; and
4. Propose changes to the Rules of Procedure, as required, to implement the Subgroup’s recommendations.

Items 1 and 2 above: **Due: 46th Executive Committee meeting** (October 2018).

Items 3 and 4 above: **Due: 47th Executive Committee meeting** (March 2019) for discussion; **Due: 48th Executive Committee** (July 2019) for decision.

5.2 Review of Requests for Participating Organization Status (Document 44.13 – for decision)

Outcomes:

The Executive Committee approved the applications from the following organizations:

- Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD);
- Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP); and
- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA).

The Executive Committee deferred approval of the applications from the following organizations, pending a GEO-XV Plenary decision regarding the proposed GEO Associate category:

- China Association for Geographic Information Society (CAGIS); and
- Water, Environment and Human Development Initiative (WEHDI).

6 GEO WEEK 2018 AND MINISTERIAL PLANNING

6.1 GEO Week 2018 Plenary Planning – Report of the Subgroup (Document 44.10 – for discussion)

Japan provided a summary of the key points in the document. The GEO Week 2018 tagline will be “Supporting a resilient and sustainable world”. Japan also announced that the opening keynote speaker would be Mami Mizutori, UN Assistant Secretary General and Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction. There will be three panel sessions during the Plenary, one each on Agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework. Each session will have a moderator and four or five panellists, with a keynote presentation prior to each panel. There will be a session on regional GEOSS initiatives on the first day. About 35 proposals for side events have been received, although this number will likely be reduced as there are opportunities to combine some events. The second call for exhibitors has been issued and interested organizations should contact organizers as soon as possible.

The Secretariat noted that the next Lead Co-Chair will be announced at the Plenary and that the priorities for 2019 will be introduced at the 46th Executive Committee meeting just after the Plenary.

Outcome: The Executive Committee thanked Japan and the GEO Week 2018 Subgroup for their efforts in organizing GEO Week 2018 events and for their update.

Action 44.10: Plenary organizers to include recognition of the contributions of current and previous Plenary hosts during the GEO-XV Plenary. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

6.2 Ministerial 2019 (Document 44.11 – for decision)

Australia opened the discussion with an offer to host the GEO-XVI Plenary and Ministerial. A short video presentation was shown that described the proposed host city of Canberra.

South Africa, China and the United States indicated their support for the proposal.

The Secretariat Director drew attention to the Mexico City Declaration in which ministers called for a Ministerial in 2019 to review progress and reaffirm directions. It will be important for GEO to demonstrate to ministers and the GEO community that progress has been made, such as with Digital Earth Africa, data cubes, and GEO Flagships. GEO will need a level of preparation adequate to this task and thus needs to start the planning process immediately. The Director requested that the Executive Committee approve establishment of a Ministerial Working Group, to which the GEO community would be invited to nominate members. This Working Group would define the content of the declaration and of the ministers’ package. The aim of the Ministerial sessions should be to avoid having just a sequence of statements from ministers, but to also give ministers a sense of GEO’s achievements.

The United States, China, Germany, European Commission, and CEOS offered to participate in the Ministerial Working Group.

South Africa stated that it would be important to ensure a high rate of participation of ministers. This is the responsibility of Members, not the Secretariat, and the process needs to start now.

Germany remarked that the level of participation was also dependent on the content. It will be important to build a solid case worthy of ministerial attendance.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee accepted the offer from Australia to host the GEO-XVI Plenary and Ministerial in 2019.

The Executive Committee endorsed the action to establish a Working Group to identify potential topics and themes for the Ministerial and to define the contents of the ministers' package. The Ministerial Working Group will also determine the initial GEO outreach regarding the Ministerial package, including the declaration. The call for nominations to the Ministerial Working Group will be made on 31 July with a deadline of 7 September 2018.

Executive Committee members were encouraged to begin engagement with their ministers to identify which minister will be invited to attend the Ministerial.

Action 44.11: The Secretariat and the Lead Co-Chair to prepare the terms of reference for the Ministerial Working Group. **Due: 31 July 2018.**

Action 44.12: The Secretariat to issue a call through the Executive Committee for nominations to the Ministerial Working Group. **Nominations to be received at the Secretariat by 7 September 2018.**

7 2017-2019 GEO WORK PROGRAMME

7.1 Report of the Programme Board (Document 44.9 – for information; Presentation by Ivan DeLoatch, Programme Board co-chair)

Ivan DeLoatch, Programme Board co-chair, gave a brief presentation summarizing the outcomes of the 9th Programme Board meeting. Mr DeLoatch reviewed the status of the work on mapping the alignment of Work Programme activities to the three GEO engagement priorities. He emphasized the importance of filling the vacant Secretariat position on SDGs and noted the progress being made by the Paris Agreement Subgroup. The Sendai Subgroup is currently developing a problem statement that will set out specific actions on which GEO should focus; this proposal will be discussed at the 10th Programme Board meeting in September. Mr DeLoatch noted that the Implementation Plan for the Land Degradation Neutrality Initiative was accepted and thus the Initiative will be included in the Work Programme update for the GEO-XV Plenary. An Implementation Plan for an Arctic GEOSS Initiative, being led by Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks (SAON), was expected and a review process within Programme Board was being set up. Initiation of the development process for the 2020-2022 Work Programme would begin at the 10th Programme Board meeting. Programme Board will assess what is working and not working, including examining whether Work Programme activities are active. Mr DeLoatch also noted that two new Subgroups were created at the 9th meeting, one to examine the format for future GEO Symposia, and another to consider diversity issues within GEO.

Germany supported the Subgroup on GEO Symposia, sharing the observation of the Programme Board that more could be done to make the Symposium programme more distinct from the Plenary. On the Diversity Subgroup, Germany cautioned against an approach wherein quotas would be set or participants otherwise excluded.

China requested that all presentations and the report of the Symposium should be available on the GEO website. Broad engagement with the Work Programme should be encouraged, not limiting it to a small group. On monitoring of the Work Programme, it is essential to check on progress of each activity.

Mr DeLoatch responded that the Programme Board heard from the GEO community that there was interest in discussing thematic issues at the Symposium, not just technical. Regarding diversity, he clarified that the intent was not to set quotas, but to ensure that organizers of events took account of

diversity. On the issue of breadth of involvement, he noted that this will need to be addressed as part of the review of Implementation Plans.

South Africa agreed that the diversity question was not about quotas and that GEO needs to grapple with the issue of diversity. This is not about optics, but about ensuring that there is a diversity of voices in the work of GEO which will enrich what GEO does.

Australia reinforced the view expressed by South Africa. Fostering diversity is not about doing a favour for those who are under-represented, it is about doing a favour for GEO by bringing in other opinions that could help make GEO stronger.

The European Commission agreed that diversity and inclusiveness are part of the “DNA” of GEO.

Outcome: The Executive Committee took note of the Programme Board report and thanked Mr DeLoatch for his presentation.

7.2 Report of the Programme Board Subgroup on Regional GEOSS (Document 44.9, Appendix 1 – for information; Presentations by Mmboneni Muofhe for AfriGEOSS, Angelica Gutierrez for AmeriGEOSS, Xingfa Gu for AOGEOSS, Gilles Ollier for EuroGEOSS, and Imraan Saloojee for the Subgroup on Regional GEOSS)

Presentations were provided by representatives of each of the Regional GEOSS Initiatives. The presentations followed a common structure in which three sets of questions were addressed:

1. What drives the Regional GEO agenda and priority setting and how does it link to the GEO engagement priorities?
2. Does the Regional Initiative collaborate or coordinate its activities with other Regional Initiatives, and if so how? What is the relationship of the Regional Initiative with the GEOSS Platform? Are there plans for development of a regional platform or other infrastructure?
3. What are the key gaps or challenges for the Regional Initiative in its relationship with the global GEO organization?

Regarding the first question on priorities and drivers, Regional agendas were all driven primarily by the particular needs within each region, although there was some degree of overlap between them. All were supporting at least one of the three engagement priorities, although regions tended to focus their efforts on one or two of priorities.

Communication between the Regional Initiatives has been limited, although all saw potential in improving linkages. All of the Initiatives made use of the GEOSS Platform and there was little intent to develop regional platforms, with the exception of AmeriGEOSS, which has a community platform that is closely linked to the GEOSS Platform and developed in collaboration with the GEOSS Evolve team.

Several common challenges were identified, including: funding for regional projects; sustained support from the GEO Secretariat; and the development of products and services to serve regional users. All saw a key role for the Regional Initiatives in helping to coordinate engagement with users in their regions across the Work Programme.

Following the presentations from the Regional Initiatives, Imraan Saloojee, Co-Chair of the Programme Board Subgroup on Regional GEOSS, provided a summary of the Subgroup’s discussions thus far on this topic. The Subgroup sees the development and evolution of the Regional Initiatives positively, as it has the potential of making GEO more visible and relevant to regional, national and sub-national users and decision makers. On the other hand, GEO must ensure that these Initiatives are “governed” to ensure that their objectives are aligned with those of the global GEO. Mr Saloojee also noted that the four Caucus-based Regional Initiatives are distinct from thematic Initiatives like Himalayan GEOSS that, while defined geographically, have more in common with the thematic activities in the Work Programme.

The Secretariat Director thanked all those involved in Regional Initiatives, noting that these are a most welcome addition to the GEO landscape. He then stated that, given the approval of the Plan of Action in Session 3, there is a need to review the way forward on regional infrastructures. Some have expressed their desire to use the GEOSS Platform as a dissemination mechanism for products and services developed in the regions, which is in line with the Plan of Action. The Director requested that Regional Initiatives refrain from further steps in the direction of building regional infrastructures such as mirror platforms that would need to be interoperable with the GEOSS Platform. He also stated the view that projects undertaken by Regional Initiatives should be inside the structure of the Work Programme to ensure that they follow GEO data policies and are monitored by the Programme Board.

Finland agreed that GEO should provide some direction to the community on what it is trying to achieve. Regions will benefit from common approaches, such as an improved search tool.

Australia stated that the key question is whether Regional Initiatives are regional GEOs or regional GEOSSes. There appears to be no desire within the regions to create new platforms, only to “put a skin” on top of the existing GEOSS Platform, which doesn’t duplicate infrastructure.

The United States expressed the view that the Caucus-based Initiatives are part of the structure of GEO and are connected with the Caucuses. Clarification of the expectations for Regional GEOs is needed, including what services would be provided to them by the Secretariat.

China asked whether Regional Initiatives might be used as a test bed before moving to global implementation of the new approach.

Ivan DeLoatch stated that AmeriGEOSS was already at the “platinum” level in that it enabled access to documents, collaboration tools, and analytics. This should be seen as an example of what can be done and treated as a pilot of the global GEOSS.

Germany expressed the view that Regional Initiatives were mostly at the downstream end of global activities. They should be free to use what they want and to downscale or adapt the global system to fit their needs. Germany does not believe that regional projects necessarily should be included in the Work Programme.

South Africa observed that while much of the discussion was on infrastructure, the Regional Initiatives are much more than this, reaching out to entities and communities that the global GEO has difficulty engaging. They also can connect to data sets that would not necessarily be visible to the global GEO. This raises the question of whether there is a need for a “federated approach” to GEOSS.

The European Commission stated that GEO needs to think more about the end user. Regional Initiatives share a common goal of extending the benefits of GEOSS to the region. GEO should not discard what has been launched, but build on what is existing. Regional Initiatives are mostly networks of people.

China stated that GEO should make regional offices more practical, since a regional body is needed to interpret global guidelines within the region. There are layers within GEO: global, regional, national, local. Similar components can be repeated at various levels.

Finland cautioned that while it is reasonable to allow for some flexibility to Regional initiatives, since our ultimate goal is to go global, some hierarchy is needed to direct efforts towards the global goal.

Japan agreed with the European Commission that Regional Initiatives are focused on downstream programs and coordination. This should not be subject to Programme Board evaluation.

The United Kingdom expressed the view that the current flexibility of Regional Initiatives should be retained, including on infrastructure. It is important to allow engagement of users and commercial entities.

The United States stated that a truly adaptive system must have flexibility and innovation at each level. At some point you lose control of the data, but absolute control should not be a requirement. If it satisfies user needs, it should not be a problem for inclusion.

Australia noted that GEO is not the only international organization with a regional structure. If Executive Committee agrees that the Regional Initiatives are a structural component rather than a project, the Regional GEOs could also work collaboratively with the regional components of other international organizations.

Outcome: Outcome: The Executive Committee thanked the regional representatives and the Co-Chair of the Programme Board Subgroup for their presentations. The Executive Committee and Presenters discussed the myriad of characteristics of Regional GEOSS initiatives (RGIs) – from organizing frameworks, to requirements, to IT infrastructure. Ultimately, to positioning within GEO governance and Work Programme. The Executive Committee determined that as a matter of priority, the assessment should focus on the nature and purpose of RGIs, and their proper placement with GEO's organizational structure and relationships.

Action 44.13: The Subgroup on Regional GEOSS to continue its work, focusing on interactions of regional GEOs with the global GEO, including organizational connections and communications exchange, and any recommended changes to their terms and conditions required to recognize their distinct role. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

8 REVIEW OF SESSION OUTCOMES AND ACTION ITEMS

8.1 Any Other Business

Finland drew attention to the 2nd Arctic Science Ministerial which will be held on 25-26 October 2018 in Berlin. GEO has sent one deliverable to this meeting related to Arctic GEOSS.

China asked whether Executive Committee should revisit the discussion regarding the number of Executive Committee meetings per year.

Australia expressed the view that having only one meeting between Plenary meetings would be insufficient to track progress and to prepare for the next Plenary.

The Secretariat Director stated that he appreciated the view from China on this matter, but noted that in 2019 GEO will be developing a new Work Programme, a new strategy for GEOSS, and preparing for a Ministerial. It will be important to the Secretariat to have Executive Committee guidance on these issues.

Outcome: The Executive Committee decided to retain the current schedule of four meetings per year through 2019. The question of the number of Executive Committee meetings would be revisited after the Ministerial.

The Lead Co-Chair recommended considering to conduct an evaluation of organisational effectiveness by utilizing the established 360-degree assessment. The Secretariat could identify an appropriate means of doing this, with the support of the World Meteorological Organization, and bring a suggestion forward to the next Executive Committee meeting.

Australia supported the proposal from the Lead Co-Chair, noting that the focus should be on coaching and not on evaluation.

Outcome: The Executive Committee expressed interest in conducting a 360-degree assessment using the previously established tool.

Action 44.14: The Secretariat to propose an approach for implementing a 360-degree assessment. **Due: 45th Executive Committee meeting.**

8.2 Review of Action Items

The Executive Committee reviewed and approved the Outcomes and Action Items from the meeting.

8.3 Closing Remarks

The Co-Chairs thanked all participants and thanked the Lead Co-Chair for a well-managed meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 16:09

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