Report of the Subgroup on Work Programme Monitoring

This document is submitted to the Program Board for discussion.

1   INTRODUCTION

In May of this year, the Monitoring Subgroup discussed a proposal from the Secretariat for a strategy for monitoring the GEO Work Programme (GWP). This strategy was based on the concept of maturation over time of GWP activities in terms of their ability to provide EO-based products and services. Monitoring would, in this approach, focus on looking at the progress of each activity in achieving a series of milestones or criteria in the process toward eventually providing operational products and/or services.

While not every activity would be expected to reach operational status – as some initial concepts may prove to be unworkable, other alternatives may be better, or activities may be combined within others under a broader framework – for GEO to be truly results-oriented requires that operational services eventually emerge from at least some GWP activities. A systematic monitoring process, as envisioned in the 2016-2025 Strategic Plan, would assist the Programme Board in nurturing GWP activities toward this end.

The rationale for using a maturity model approach as the basis for monitoring the GWP was described in Document PB-09.06b "Monitoring and Assessing Progress of Work Programme Activities" and is summarized below:

- The Programme Board mandate is primarily focussed on management of the GWP. Some of these decisions require information on the status of implementation of GWP activities.
- Criteria to be used for assessing progress of GWP activities were not defined in the Strategic Plan Reference Document. Such criteria are required to determine which information must be collected in the monitoring process.
- The concept of a maturation process of GWP activities appears in the Strategic Plan and suggests that activities should be "proactively nurtured towards transitioning into operational services that deliver societal benefits". This view is supported by more recent direction from Executive Committee regarding the importance of providing services to end users and in demonstrating impact from GWP activities.
- The criteria already established for assessing Implementation Plans may serve as a starting point for a set of assessment criteria. These criteria would need to be reviewed for consistency with the maturity model approach as well as to reflect Programme Board's experience applying them in the context of Implementation Plan reviews.
- Once a set of assessment criteria have been determined, the information requirements for GWP monitoring may be derived. The Secretariat could then implement the process for collecting, organizing and analysing this information.
- Use of the maturity model approach would also enable clearer guidance to current and prospective GWP activity leads and improved reporting on GWP progress, both at summary levels (e.g. to Plenary) and for individual GWP activities.

2   RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL

The draft monitoring strategy was presented to the 9th Programme Board meeting in June. Programme Board agreed with use of a maturity model approach but raised several issues to be considered further by the Subgroup. These included:

- It should not be assumed as a general expectation that Flagships would eventually transition out of the GWP.
- Some of the specific criteria that had been suggested, including some of the criteria included in the Strategic Plan Reference Document, could be improved.
- Some believed that the maturity model was not applicable to Community Activities and that Programme Board should not assess them.
- There was some uncertainty whether the criteria for assessing Implementation Plans at entry to the GWP (or transition to a higher level) should be the same as the criteria for assessing progress within a level.

The Subgroup held one teleconference since the 9th Programme Board meeting. This teleconference was attended by four Subgroup members plus the Secretariat. The discussion focused on the issues raised at the Programme Board meeting.

Two interpretations of the categories of Implementation Mechanisms (Community Activities, Initiatives, and Flagships) emerged from the Subgroup discussion. Part of the reason for the difficulty in explaining the categories to people unfamiliar with GEO is that these two conceptions are not consistent with one another, but both can be supported by language within the 2016-2025 Strategic Plan.

In one interpretation, it is assumed that the ultimate intent of all GWP activities is to eventually provide operational Earth observation services (and products) to some defined set of users. These services may be global or regional, they may be comprehensive within a particular domain or limited, and the users may be intermediaries or end users or some combination. In this interpretation, the differences between the categories primarily reflect the level of maturity of the activity. Community Activities are intended as test beds for demonstrating the feasibility of a new service. Initiatives take a demonstrated service or set of services to scalable, pre-operational status. Flagships turn pre-operational services into sustainable operational services.

In the other interpretation, the distinction between the categories sees the Community Activities as reflecting not necessarily a level of maturity of the services, but simply a choice of the proponents to be part of the GWP with minimal expectations of monitoring and management by GEO. Initiative status, by contrast, is chosen by those proponents who desire a more active relationship with GEO and which generally have ambitions to provide global-scale services. Flagships are viewed as those activities that have a policy mandate at a global level, regardless of the level of maturity of their services. In this conception, the categories are not aligned along a scale of maturity but reflect other attributes. To the extent that a maturity model is appropriate to understanding the GWP, it would be <u>within</u> each of the categories, not across them.

The choice of interpretation has a fundamental impact on the design of a GWP monitoring strategy, as well as on the criteria that ought to be used to assess proposed activities on entry to the GWP or on movement from one category to another. If the categories are arrayed along the maturity scale, then one set of criteria should be used, while if level of maturity were not relevant to this, then the criteria should look quite different. This also should have implications for how the choice of category is communicated to potential activity proponents.

3 RELEVANCE TO PLANNING FOR THE 2020-2022 GEO WORK PROGRAMME

The Strategic Plan 2016-2025 Reference Document proposed a series of three-year GWPs, with allowance for annual revisions. Development of the next multi-annual GWP, covering the years 2020-2022, must begin in September 2018 to ensure completion in time for the GEO-XVI Plenary in 2019.

The transition to a new GWP offers an opportunity to review the current templates and criteria that have been in place since 2016. Ideally, this review should take into account of the weaknesses in GWP monitoring and the difficulties encountered in explaining the different categories of Implementation Mechanisms to both GEO participants and to external audiences. If a call to the GEO community for new contributions to the GWP is issued in early 2019, it will be imperative that this work on templates and criteria be completed in time for the 11th Programme Board meeting (tentatively scheduled for January 2019).

4 TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

The views of Programme Board members are sought on the following questions and options regarding implementation of a maturity model approach to GWP monitoring and assessment:

- Are the Implementation Mechanism (IM) categories (Flagship, Initiative, Community Activity) stages in the maturity process or distinct types of activities? Note that, for now, the Foundational Tasks and Regional GEOSSes are not included within the maturity model approach.
- Should the criteria for acceptance of a GWP activity be the same as (or closely related to) those used to assess maturity and progress?
- Should the progress of Community Activities be monitored and assessed as part of the maturity model approach?

There are two primary options for how this relationship may be interpreted:

Option 1. The three IM categories represent stages along the maturation process. While not all activities will transition between categories, just as not all activities will succeed in maturing within a category, the ideal outcome for all activities would be to achieve Flagship status as a fully-mature initiative.

Option 2. Each IM category represents a distinct kind of activity. Within each category, there should be an expectation of maturation or progress of the activity, but there should be no expectation that activities will transition from one category to another. However, the possibility should remain that activities may choose to move between categories.

There are also two additional options that represent intermediate positions between Options 1 and 2:

Option 3. Community activities and Initiatives may be viewed as stages along a single maturation process, while Flagships must meet additional criteria (e.g., global policy mandate) that are distinct from maturation of the activity. In this interpretation, an activity may have reached full maturity in terms of its provision of services as an Initiative without meeting the criteria for a Flagship. Conversely, an activity may be designated as a Flagship based on the additional criteria even though it may be at a lower level of maturity than some Initiatives.

Option 4. Some Community Activities may prefer this status due to the limited expectations for Implementation Plans and reporting to GEO. This provides them with visibility within the

GEO Work Programme and an opportunity to contribute to GEOSS, while imposing minimal demands. Under this interpretation, the concept of maturity within the Community Activity category may be irrelevant and thus only apply to Initiatives and Flagships.