



GEO PLENARY XII SIDE EVENT ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



SESSION 6: THE GEO INITIATIVE ON SDG

Session 6 Discussion Groups

Introduction

The draft Mexico City Ministerial Declaration calls on GEO “to launch a GEO initiative to leverage Earth observations to support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 2030 Global Goals for Sustainable Development.” In addition, the proposed 2016 Work Programme includes a notional description of GEO Initiative 18 (GI-18), which will develop and implement “GEOs role in defining the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and providing support to countries in measuring, monitoring and achieving the SDGs.”¹

The GEO Side Event on the SDGs is specifically designed to increase awareness and understanding of the GEO Community on the significance of and opportunity for Earth observation applications in the 2030 Agenda and the SDG process. More importantly, **the side event’s primary purpose is for the attendees to identify major elements of the dedicated GEO Initiative GI-18**, addressing both GEO contributions overall and GEO support to countries on SDG planning, tracking and reporting.

Session 6 is the period for the attendees to synthesize the information from the side event to scope and refine the GEO Initiative. The session will have small discussion groups which will:

- » Discuss and refine the primary goals for the Initiative
- » Discuss and examine options for GEO activities
- » Discuss and determine primary paths for GEO action on the Initiative
- » Determine concrete recommendations for the GEO Initiative on SDG

Following the small group discussions, the attendees will all meet together to a) hear the report-outs from each group and b) reach consensus on information and recommendations to take to the GEO Plenary about the Initiative and GEO action on the SDG.

Overall, attendees will shape the Initiative and help form the initial team to activate it in 2016. In specific, there are numerous meetings and events in 2016 where representatives from GEO Member Countries and Participating Organizations are needed to get involved, contribute, and ensure that Earth observations and geospatial information are addressed and included in the support to the SDG process.

Descriptions of the four discussion groups are below.

Locations for the groups will be announced at the beginning of Session 6.

¹ The text on the SDGs from the draft Mexico City Ministerial Declaration and the GEO Initiative GI-18 description are provided at the end of this document.

SDG Side Event: Discussion Groups

Each small group will have a specific topic to discuss, as follows.

(Note: There may be multiple groups on a topic.)

Group A. GEO Initiative on SDG: Resource, Enabler, or Activist?

This group will discuss the role(s) for GEO regarding the Initiative and how proactive GEO should be in pursuing the use of Earth observations to support SDG. The group will discuss a spectrum of roles, such as one of a consulting, reactive role when approached by countries for assistance to one of a proactive role to expedite activity. The group will also discuss the tasks associated with each of the roles and which are best suited for GEO now and in the future. The group will identify major elements of GI-18 and initial projects and activities to pursue in 2016, particularly on how to make the integration of Earth observations in the SDG process happen. Based on the discussion, the group can articulate its recommendations and key rationales.

Group B. GEO Initiative on SDG: Breadth v. Depth?

This group will discuss the scope and pace of the GEO Initiative, particularly how broad or narrow GEO should be in pursuing the use of Earth observations to support SDG. Given the number of SDG goals and GEO societal benefit areas, this group can discuss whether GEO should focus thematically or not. This group will also address how GEO should focus and organize the Initiative vis a vis countries, such as whether to be all inclusive, to focus on certain regions, or focus by country capacity. The group will identify major elements of GI-18 and initial projects and activities to pursue in 2016, particularly on how to make the integration of Earth observations in the SDG process happen. Based on the discussion, the group can articulate its recommendations and key rationales.

Group C. GEO Initiative on SDG: How and Whom to Partner With?

This group will discuss the GEO partnerships regarding the Initiative. The side event identified several entities that are set up to support the SDG process, such as the Global Partnership, UN SDSN, Development Banks, and NGOs. In some cases, GEO already has involvement, such as the Global Partnership; there are others where involvement would be productive. This group will discuss GEO approaches to partnerships in GI-18, including a focus on how to get people from the GEO community to participate in the partners' activities in coordinated ways. The group will identify major elements of GI-18 and initial projects and activities to pursue in 2016, particularly on how to make the integration of Earth observations in the SDG process happen. Based on the discussion, the group can articulate its recommendations and key rationales.

Group D. GEO Initiative on SDG: Ways to Engage with National Statistical Practices?

This group will discuss the relationship with national statistical collections and practice in the GEO Initiative. This group will discuss approaches to improve and innovate SDG data flows utilizing Earth observations and monitoring with national statistical collections and practice. The group will identify major elements of GI-18 and initial projects and activities to pursue in 2016, particularly on how to make the integration of Earth observations in the SDG process happen. Based on the discussion, the group can articulate its recommendations and key rationales.

Ministerial Declaration and SDG

The following items are statements about the 2030 Global Goals for Sustainable Development in the draft Mexico City Ministerial Declaration (Document MS3):

We, Ministers, GEO Members and Participants attending the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Mexico City Ministerial Summit:

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2. Note that Earth observations take many forms including in situ, remotely sensed, and space based. **Welcome** GEO's inclusion of all of these types in its efforts. **Emphasize** that Earth observations and economic and social data, information and knowledge should be used together for policy and program decisions. **Affirm** that GEO and its Earth observations and information will support the implementation of, inter alia, the 2030 Global Goals for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, the United Nations System of Environmental and Economic Accounts, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

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8. Call on GEO to launch a GEO initiative to leverage Earth observations to support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the 2030 Global Goals for Sustainable Development, building on the recent success of GEO's engagement with the United Nations on this issue.

GEO Work Programme and GEO Initiative GI-18 on the SDGs

The following text is the description of GEO Initiative GI-18 in the proposed GEO Work Programme v3 (GEO Plenary XII Document 15, pp. 96/138).

GEO Initiative GI-18

GEO's role in defining the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and providing support to countries in measuring, monitoring and achieving the SDGs.

Overview

GEO's existing strategic engagement with several key Member States and UN Agencies regarding the important role of Earth observations in measuring, monitoring and achieving the emerging Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides a strong foundation to deepen GEO's involvement and contributions in this critical and timely area.

Goals:

- 1) To engage with Member States, the UN Statistics Division and other partners in the development of the indicators supporting the SDG Goals and Targets to be approved by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016.
- 2) Develop pilot projects in one or more GEO Member countries focused on integrating Earth observations with national statistical accounts to better measure, monitor and achieve the SDGs.

Implementation:

Goal 1) GEO will expand its partnership with the UN Statistics Division and the UN Initiative on Global Geospatial Information (UN GGIM), other relevant UN agencies (UN Water, UNEP, WHO, etc.), selected Member States and other partners (The World Bank, SDSN, etc.) to help develop the indicators that will support the SDG Goals and Targets.

Goal 2) GEO will expand its partnership with the UN Statistics Division and the UN Initiative on Global Geospatial Information (UN GGIM), other relevant UN agencies (UN Water, UNEP, UNOOSA, etc.), selected Member States (in particular, developing countries) and other partners (CEOS, SDSN, The World Bank, etc.) to help build processes, mechanisms and human capacity to integrate Earth observations with national statistical accounts to improve the measuring, monitoring and achievement of the SDGs.

This activity could serve as an early pilot of the GEO focus on identifying Global Earth Observation User Needs. In addition, GEO will deepen its partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), UN Water, UNEP, UNESCO, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, CIESIN and other partners in the development and implementation of the GEMI initiative (Integrated monitoring of water and sanitation related SDG targets), with a particular focus on integrating Earth observations into existing, traditional water quality and water management measuring and monitoring mechanisms.

2016 Plans

A one-day side event is planned to take place during the GEO week in November 2015, Mexico City with the objective to form the initial team to activate the initiative in 2016.