

## **Delegation to Executive Committee of Authority to Approve Applications for Participating Organizations and Observers**

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

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

In anticipation of potential Plenary approval of the revised criteria for Observers and Participating Organizations (POs) to join the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) (see Executive Committee Document 4 and Plenary Document 14, “Revised Criteria for Observers, Participating Organizations and Moratorium”), and the consequent lifting of the moratorium on approving new POs, the Executive Committee held a preliminary exchange of views on the need to expedite the process for the pending Participating Organization applications.

Unless Plenary chooses to act on these pending applications at GEO-XII, two scenarios are presented herein to expedite the process of approval. Both scenarios involve delegation of authority from Plenary to the Executive Committee.

The first scenario calls for time-limited authority, only to assess the pending PO applications, while the second calls for permanent delegation of authority, to be promulgated in the Rules of Procedure.

### **2 PLENARY DELEGATION OPTIONS**

#### **2.1 Option 1 – Time-limited Delegation for PO status**

The Executive Committee will request GEO-XII Plenary the delegation of authority to approve, at its 36<sup>th</sup> Session in March 2016, applications for PO status, characterized as:

- Standing applications for PO status (submitted prior to 10 November 2015); and
- Applications for PO status from those organizations that wanted to apply as POs in 2015, but because of the moratorium, only applied as Observers.

The Secretariat will ask for updated applications using the new criteria, in time for distribution to the Executive Committee for its 36<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Applications for PO status, beyond those in the current grouping, will be dealt with according to the current process, i.e. Executive Committee recommendation and Plenary approval.

This time-limited delegation, if approved, would be recorded in the GEO-XII Plenary Report.

## **2.2 Option 2 – Permanent Delegation for PO and Observer status**

The Executive Committee will request GEO-XII Plenary permanent delegation of authority to approve applications for POs and Observers.

All applications for PO and Observer status will be reviewed and acted upon by the Executive Committee, with Plenary's annual recognition, as currently occurs for new Member governments.

One direct benefit of a permanent delegation of authority would be a streamlined procedure that avoids the current situation of inviting potential POs and Observers to Plenary meetings, when the approval of their status is still pending.

This permanent delegation is requested on the basis of the provisions of point 3.3 in the updated GEO Rules of Procedure (RoP), (see GEO-XII Plenary Document 17(Rev 1), which states:

“3.3 Delegation of powers: The GEO Plenary may explicitly and formally delegate decision-making powers to other bodies of the GEO organizational structure and/or other subsidiary bodies as appropriate, in the interest of efficiency and expediency in the implementation of GEO activities.”

This permanent delegation, if approved, would be recorded in the GEO-XII Plenary Report<sup>1</sup>, and Annex A of the Rules of Procedure would be updated as proposed in Attachment 1.

## **3 CONCLUSIONS**

The Executive Committee is requested to discuss the options described above, and decide an appropriate course of action for GEO-XII.

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<sup>1</sup> Rather than modify the body of the RoP document in several places.

## ATTACHMENT 1

**Proposed modifications to**

**ANNEX A to the GEO Rules of Procedure**

**Draft Guidance for Recognition of**

**New GEO Participating Organizations and Observers**

Entities requesting official recognition as a GEO Participating Organization or Observer will be considered based on the following guidelines:

- 1 Membership in the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is open to all member States of the United Nations and to the European Commission. GEO welcomes, as Participating Organizations, intergovernmental, international, and regional organizations, development banks, foundations and non-governmental organizations with a mandate and/or interest in, or be a user of Earth observations, information or services – that is, the full spectrum and/or value chain from data collection to use. Acceptance is subject to approval by Plenary.
- 2 The difference between Participating Organization and Observer Status is largely based on the level of involvement in GEO. Participating Organizations are eligible to serve on the Programme Board, and may join any of the Working Groups or Task Forces that coordinate and conduct GEO's work. Observers, on the other hand, may only attend Plenaries to observe and monitor GEO proceedings. Acceptance of Observers is also subject to approval by Plenary.
- 3 The Participating Organization applicant must identify their proposed contribution to GEO, including, but not limited to, involvement in the GEO Work Programme, and/or the function performed by the organization that would benefit the broader GEO community. Examples include capacity building, data sharing, programme development, training and education, and communication and outreach. Applicants must endorse the GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS. Independent recognition of sub-programmes or subgroups of currently recognized Participation Organizations are generally discouraged from seeking independent recognition. Generally, the parent organization is considered sufficient. In selected instances, and if a compelling argument is presented as to why separate participation is being sought, applications will be considered.
- 4 Joint programmes (programmes established under the auspices of two or more recognized Participating Organizations) may be designated by the ~~Plenary Executive Committee~~ as a separate Participating Organization or Observer. ~~Before each Plenary, the Executive Committee will review applications received by the Secretariat, and will recommend Participating Organizations and Observers for recognition by the Plenary.~~
- 5 The ~~Plenary Executive Committee~~ will ~~review~~ consider applications received and reviewed by the Secretariat and, ~~taking into account the recommendations of the Executive Committee~~, make the final decision on the approval of the requests for ~~recognition of~~ Participating Organizations and

Observers status according to the above criteria. The Secretariat will undertake, on a rolling basis, the task of analysing contributions made by Participating Organizations in GEO. A timeframe of 3 years will be used to assess such contributions. The intent of such an analysis is to encourage active participation and engagement in the work of GEO.

56 The Plenary will recognize Participating Organizations and Observers at its earliest session.

## APPENDIX 1 to ANNEX A

### Participating Organizations

#### Note to Organizations Requesting Recognition as a Participating Organization in GEO

GEO welcomes, as Participating Organizations, intergovernmental, international and regional organizations, development banks, foundations and non-governmental organizations with a mandate or interest in, or be a user of Earth observations, information, and/or services – that is the full spectrum and/or value chain from data collection to use.

The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is coordinating efforts to build a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). It is a voluntary partnership of governments and Participating Organizations that provides a flexible action-oriented framework for developing new activities, tasks, initiatives, and partnerships across GEO's Societal Benefit Areas (SBAs).

Opportunities and benefits of joining GEO include: fostering partnerships (new contacts and collaborations); launching regional and/or global initiatives; providing access to data (making more data available); increasing users of Earth observations (users grow in numbers and diversity); building capacity throughout the world; increasing visibility and high-level support for sustained Earth observations and leveraging funding for activities nationally, regionally and globally. The procedure to join GEO is as follows:

To be recognized as a Participating Organization of GEO, entities must send a letter to the GEO Secretariat, requesting formal recognition as a GEO Participating Organization. This letter must identify the proposed contributions to GEO, including, but not limited to, involvement in the GEO Work Programme, and/or the function performed by the organization that would benefit the broader GEO community. Examples include capacity building, data sharing, programme development, training and education, and communication and outreach. Applicants must endorse the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS*. The Strategic Plan can be found at: <http://www.earthobservations.org/index.html>

~~Prior to each Plenary Session, the~~ The GEO Executive Committee will ~~review~~ consider requests for Participating Organization status recognition received and reviewed by the Secretariat and will make the final decision on their approval. ~~recommendations for recognition by the Plenary.~~ The Plenary will recognize new Participating Organizations at its earliest session. ~~act on the requests for recognition by consensus of GEO Members present.~~

A letter of interest and online application should be sent to:

The Secretariat Director  
GEO Secretariat  
7, bis avenue de la Paix,  
Case postale 2300  
CH-1211 Geneva 2  
Switzerland

## APPENDIX 2 to ANNEX A

### Observers in GEO

#### Note to Organizations Requesting Recognition as Observer

GEO welcomes, as Observers, intergovernmental, international and regional organizations, development banks, foundations, and non-governmental organizations with a mandate or interest in, or being a user of Earth observations, information, and/or services – that is, the entire spectrum or value-chain from data collection to use.

The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is coordinating efforts to build a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). It is a voluntary partnership of governments and Participating Organizations that provides a flexible action-oriented framework for developing new activities, tasks, initiatives, and partnerships across GEO's Societal Benefit Areas (SBAs).

Opportunities and benefits of joining GEO include: fostering partnerships (new contacts and collaborations); launching regional and/or global initiatives; providing access to data (making more data available); increasing users of Earth observations (users grow in numbers and diversity); building capacity throughout the world; increasing visibility and high-level support for sustained Earth observations and leveraging funding for activities nationally, regionally and globally.

The procedure to join GEO is as follows:

To be recognized as an Observer of GEO, entities must send a letter to the GEO Secretariat, requesting formal recognition as an Observer, and a completed application, acknowledging that you are familiar with the Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS. The Strategic Plan can be found at: <http://www.earthobservations.org/index.html>

~~Prior to each Plenary session, the~~ The GEO Executive Committee will ~~review~~ consider requests for Observer status ~~recognition~~ received and reviewed by the Secretariat, and will make the final decision on their approval ~~recommendations for recognition by the Plenary~~. The Plenary will recognize Participating Organizations ~~new Observers at its earliest session~~ make decisions on the requests for recognition by consensus of GEO Members present.

A letter of interest, acknowledging familiarity with the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025: Implementing GEOSS* should be sent to:

The Secretariat Director  
GEO Secretariat  
7, bis avenue de la Paix,  
Case postale 2300  
CH-1211 Geneva 2