

Summary Report
24th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, 19-20 March 2012
(As accepted at the 25th Executive Committee meeting)

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The GEO Co-Chair from China, Mr Cao Jianlin, chaired the meeting. He opened by identifying the challenges and key agenda items that the meeting would need to address, including the new Work Plan management structure and the Post-2015 Working Group. He welcomed the participants and introduced Ms Barbara Ryan, who will become the next Secretariat Director on 1 July.

The Co-Chair from the European Commission (EC), Ms Manuela Soares, welcomed the new Committee members. She observed that, as GEO moves towards the conclusion of the 10-Year Implementation Plan, the entire GEO community will need to make every effort to achieve the strategic targets.

Mr Mmboneni Muofhe, speaking on behalf of the Co-Chair from South Africa, Mr Philemon Mjwara, who participated on the second day of the meeting, also welcomed the new Committee members. He highlighted South Africa's strong interest in the new AfriGEOSS initiative and looked forward to an exciting year ahead.

Ms Kathryn Sullivan, serving as the Co-Chair from the United States as the Principal Alternate for Mr Steve Fetter, noted the comprehensive agenda for the meeting. She highlighted the importance of the post-2015 discussions, which should address the scope of what GEO will aim to accomplish after the 10-Year Implementation Plan is completed.

The Secretariat Director, Mr José Achache, announced that Cote d'Ivoire has joined GEO, bringing the number of GEO Members to 89, with Armenia and Georgia also now in active discussions about joining.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1)

The Chair introduced the agenda, which was adopted without change.

1.2 Summary Report of the 23rd Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2 – for acceptance)

The Secretariat Director, Mr José Achache, presented the document. He noted that comments received from the European Commission and the United States had been reflected in the current draft. There being no further comments, the report was accepted.

1.3 Review of Actions from Previous Meetings (Document 3 – for information)

The Secretariat Director presented the document. The European Commission confirmed that, after consulting with Italy, it could recommend that Action 21.8 be closed. Referring to the reminder under Future Actions of the need for the Committee to review Secretariat performance indicators in early 2012, the Commission recommended that this be undertaken together with the next Director. This issue should be included on the agenda for the next meeting, and the Secretariat could produce a paper for it. The United States agreed with this EC proposal.

Canada, speaking on behalf of one of the co-chairs of the Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group, stated that the Group will report on Action 22.5 at the Executive Committee's next meeting in July. A call for participation will be distributed shortly for the fourth evaluation. The Group also requests that the Secretariat distribute a call for participation in the fourth evaluation in the near future.

Action 24.1: Secretariat to draft a document on the review of Secretariat performance indicators for the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Action 24.2: Secretariat to distribute call for participation in the fourth evaluation of GEOSS.

2 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS AND TRUST FUND

2.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 4 – for information)

The Secretariat Director presented the report. He highlighted the Secretariat's follow-up to the decisions taken by GEO-VIII in Istanbul on the new Work Plan, the new Work Plan management structure, and the Post-2015 Working Group. He emphasized the need to strengthen the Secretariat staff with more seconded experts.

Brazil expressed scepticism about the chance of success for the Global Network of Networks initiative emerging from the Eye on Earth Summit, in particular due to the lack of a governance structure. He applauded the EuroGEOSS broker as a highly successful project, and he thanked the European Commission for funding it and solving a key problem for GEO.

Japan referred to the upcoming Fifth Asia-Pacific Symposium and invited Committee members to consider attending.

Germany asked for more information regarding the collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP) on implementing the climate Task. The Secretariat said that there had been a positive dialogue on the transition to the new Work Plan to ensure that all of the activities that WMO and WCRP want to contribute to GEOSS are properly reflected. This has helped to ensure greater ownership of the Task by these key contributors.

The United States thanked the Secretariat for all of the work described in the report. She recognized the concern about staffing and the efforts to promote GEOSS to the broader community. She stressed the need to ensure that there is the right kind of engagement between the Secretariat and the community.

The European Commission thanked the Secretariat for its work, including the work carried out to implement the Task Sheet Update Tool. It shared the concern about staffing and observed that the Secretariat is a major resource for GEO. The EuroGEOSS broker was the result of efforts by many people; the Italian National Research Council (CNR) has undertaken to fund the effort required to maintain the Broker within the GEOSS Common Infrastructure through to 2015.

China noted that, with a number of secondments soon expiring, the Secretariat staff would need to be reinforced; China will continue to support the Secretariat with a secondment. The good news is that the GEO membership has now reached 89.

South Africa reported that it had worked closely with the Secretariat at the climate change conference (COP-17) in Durban last year to ensure a good profile for GEO, including through a side event.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Secretariat for its hard work and stated that the report was accepted.

2.2 Draft Financial Report for 2011 (Document 5 – for information)

The Secretariat Director presented the document. He described various nuances in the report, the impact of the new IPSAS system, and the total revenue and remaining surplus for the period.

The European Commission expressed its gratitude to the Secretariat for reducing expenditures in line with contributions. The EC has finalized its payment process for this year and has started already to make provisions for next year as well.

China noted that its domestic financial rules require that it obtain approvals from the financial administration; its payment will therefore come later.

The document was accepted.

2.3 Management of contributions for specific initiatives in the GEO Trust Fund

The Secretariat Director presented the item. This issue was placed on the agenda at the request of several Committee meetings following the discussion at the last meeting about Australia's support for the Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI). The concern was that the growing contributions to global initiatives such as GFOI and GEOGLAM should not lead to a reduction in contributions to the general budget. The Post-2015 Working Group may also want to discuss this issue. Today the Committee may wish to collect some ideas and task the Secretariat with incorporating them into a document for a future meeting.

Brazil said he understood the concerns expressed, but the nature of GEO is to be applications-driven and results oriented, and the support from Australia and Norway to GFOI is to be welcomed. At the same time, it remained vital for the general operations of the Secretariat to be fully funded. A good approach may be to encourage contributions for specific projects while allocating a percentage of such contributions to the general budget.

The EC agreed and suggested that the financial reports should distinguish between contributions for initiatives and those for general operations, at least as an interim step until a more robust approach is established.

The United States agreed with Brazil and the EC on the value of the global initiatives, while recognizing the challenges they pose. The question about how GEO should best manage such initiatives must be considered in the broader, context of a post-2015 GEO. Should GEO become a basket of initiatives? Should it incubate initiatives and then hand them over to other institutions to maintain? The discussion should start with a question about the future purpose of GEO and how it relates to special global initiatives and then turn to the issues of finances and reporting.

The Secretariat proposed the possibility of re-negotiating the terms of their agreement with WMO regarding special initiative funding contributions.

The Chair welcomed the comments made and suggested that these options be discussed at the Committee's next meeting. The United States agreed and suggested that the Committee's work on financing be linked to the discussions in the Post-2015 Working Group.

Action 24.3: Secretariat to submit paper on financial issues to next meeting of the Executive Committee.

3 TRANSITION TO THE NEW WORK PLAN MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE (DOCUMENT 6 – FOR INFORMATION)

The Chair observed that the Secretariat has worked closely with the community on the transition to the new Work Plan management structure. Ms Alexia Massacand of the Secretariat then presented the document. She recalled that GEO-VIII had accepted a new structure, process, and schedule for the Work Plan, and that the GEO community has been fully involved in the transition. The Executive Committee was asked to decide on a process for renewing the membership of the three Implementation Boards. The Work Plan Symposium to be held in a few weeks time will include some discussion of management questions.

The Chair stated that ensuring a smooth transition was a large task. The United States said the report showed that an impressive body of work had been carried out to facilitate this critical phase in GEOSS implementation. Transitioning to both a new Work Plan and a new management structure at the same time was a challenge and naturally generated some coordination and communication challenges. She appreciated the interest that people have shown in participating in the Boards. Both the new Work Plan structure and the Board structure serve the purpose of strengthening the Tasks and their implementation, which should remain as the ultimate area of focus. Nevertheless, the Boards and Task teams need to remember that, while process is important, results are what GEO is after.

Brazil also appreciated the efforts made in the transition. He proposed some improvements that could be made to the website. Ms Massacand agreed and stated that the Secretariat was continuing to work on updating and improving the website.

Germany thanked for Secretariat for managing the transition process.

Canada said that one of the processes put into place at GEO-VIII was encouraging GEO Principals to acknowledge internally the participation of people from their country or organization. Ms Massacand noted that the call for contributions issued in November invited contributors to inform their Principals of their work with GEO. The new Task structure should ensure more of a team approach and should boost productivity and results while keeping the process light.

Ms Yana Gevorgyan of the interim Infrastructure Implementation Board (IIB) was invited to present Annex 3 to the document, which had been contributed jointly by the Infrastructure and Institutions and Development Boards. She recalled that the Boards had all drafted action plans, in which the Boards put emphasis on monitoring and assessment. The transition to the new Work Plan seemed to engage the Boards more closely in the monitoring function. The IIB and IDIB requested that the Executive Committee ask the Secretariat and the Boards to work together in this initial phase to develop a paper for the Committee's July meeting to clarify respective functions and responsibilities.

Japan requested and received a clarification, and Russia proposed that a clear diagram be developed to make it easier to understand the new Work Plan structure.

Brazil said it would be difficult for the Executive Committee to follow all of the Tasks closely, so the Boards had a vital role. The Infrastructure Implementation Board has a clear mandate to ensure that GEO builds a system that works. The Institutions and Development Implementation Board is more cross-cutting, while the work of the Societal Benefits Implementation Board will be more dispersed. Based on this situation, he concluded that consolidated global initiatives such as GEOGLAM, as opposed to mere collections of related activities, were the right direction for GEO to go.

The United Kingdom said that the document covered a lot of ground and agreed with the comments already made. With such a major restructuring, there were bound to be problems and challenges, and the United Kingdom suggested that the Implementation Boards should note any issues with the new Task management structure in their reports to the July meeting. Important questions included whether some responsibilities, such as monitoring, should be shifted from the Secretariat to the Boards. The Executive Committee should consider putting forth its views on this. The amended agenda of the Symposium was good and demonstrates the need for the Boards and the Secretariat to work closely together.

The European Commission was pleased with the work that had been carried out. She suggested that a group consisting of co-chairs of the Boards and the Secretariat (including the incoming Director) should draft a paper on these questions for July. The Symposium would offer an opportunity to discuss these issues. Several issues are difficult to determine from the website, including who the leads are of the Tasks that consist of more than one component, as well as the difference between a Task Lead and a Task Coordinator. Some caucuses (e.g., CIS, Asia/Pacific, South America) were underrepresented on the Boards, so Committee members should encourage their caucuses to nominate more people. They also noted that there will be a workshop in May 2012 that will aim to strengthen the integration of EU-funded projects into the GEO Work Plan structure.

China said that structure is very important for enabling an organization to achieve its objectives. A diagram on how the Boards, their terms of reference, and the various Tasks relate to the objective of GEOSS could be useful. Regarding the Symposium, China is willing to prepare more experts to attend. A good definition of the “system of systems” would be helpful.

The United States agreed that a diagram might help to clarify the roles and responsibilities of this complex cross-cutting structure. Stating in clearer language the roles and responsibilities of the various entities could also be useful. Lean communication and a light-touch approach to management are important. In response to Brazil’s remark about the benefit of large-scale global activities, the United States offered that the post-2015 Working Group should consider what criteria, if any, should be used to evaluate which Tasks might become global and whether and how GEO could support such activities.

The Secretariat Director said that the new structure allowed the Boards to work on monitoring and reporting, but the Executive Committee still had a critical oversight role. Clarity about respective roles was essential. The Work Plan Symposium is to focus on content rather than process.

Ms Massacand responded that the Boards are expected to measure progress against Targets. In response to Japan’s query, she informed the group that 60 people have so far registered for the Symposium, which is very promising. Information about Task leads is on-line. China is welcome to provide further inputs for the Symposium discussions.

Brazil applauded the vital leadership role that the Secretariat had played in catalyzing GFOI and GEOGLAM.

The United States endorsed the Secretariat’s call for the Symposium to focus on content and substance. A remaining governance question concerning the Boards was how they are to report back to and be guided by the Plenary and the Executive Committee.

Japan stressed the role of the Secretariat as a facilitator with a broad view. Board members should be encouraged to serve as Task leads.

The Chair concluded the discussion by recognizing the importance of the new structure and the need to continually improve it.

Action 24.4: Co-Chairs from the three Implementation Boards and the Secretariat (including the incoming Director) to draft a paper for the 25th meeting of the Executive Committee clarifying their respective functions and responsibilities.

4 PROGRESS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GFOI (DOCUMENT 7 – FOR INFORMATION)

Mr Giovanni Rum of the Secretariat presented the document. He reported on the Task’s annual science and data summit, which had been held in Tanzania in February, and on how the two components of the Task – the Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI) and Forest Carbon Tracking FCT (FCT) – will work together. He explained that FCT activities are now part of GFOI and directly support it.

The United States questioned the change from a task force, which was established by Plenary, to a steering committee, expressing concern that a steering committee is a novel concept in GEO and that a proliferation of governance structures should be avoided. The document seems to imply that Secretariat staff are members of the steering committee. She asked for a further explanation of the relationship between GFOI and FCT.

Brazil also asked about the relationship between GFOI and FCT and how implementation will work. He noted that FCT emphasizes national demonstrators and that GFOI is building on that to coordinate in situ and satellite data. To obtain the necessary high level of accuracy, satellite data need to be under

visual interpretation by experts; this cannot be achieved through algorithms. Producing yet another guidance document does not seem to be necessary.

The United Kingdom supported hosting the GFOI project office within the GEO Secretariat in the short term; in the longer term it could be worth looking at other hosts, such as FAO. He welcomed the references in the document to the IPCC and the UNFCCC.

Germany asked what the relationship between GEO and GFOI might look like in, say, five years.

The Secretariat Director recalled the clear requests from Plenary that FCT and GFOI be well coordinated and that the work under FCT continue. This offers an opportunity to develop a model for how such initiatives should be handled. The change from a task force to a steering committee reflects the desires of the major donors to the project. The Executive Committee and then the Plenary need to take a formal position on how to handle this and other initiatives that are financed and driven by one or a limited number of donors.

Mr Rum responded that the REDD sourcebook, the guidance document referred to by Brazil, is not directly usable by countries that want to implement a national system. The documents proposed by FCT aim to provide guidance on different technical solutions.

China said that the document emphasizes the need for developing country participation; this is extremely important for GFOI's future. There are clear benefits to a global system such as GFOI.

Brazil said that the Executive Committee should consider the governance of GFOI and make a further recommendation. For example, should GFOI report directly to the Committee? He believed that the GFOI project office should be situated squarely inside the GEO Secretariat and that there was no benefit of moving it to a host such as FAO.

The United States agreed that a discussion of governance for global initiatives was important, especially as GFOI was not the only initiative going forward. The Post-2015 Working Group should examine this set of issues more fully and bring its ideas to the Executive Committee in July. While the countries that finance an initiative clearly have key influence, the fact that they chose to launch it under the GEO umbrella suggests that they recognize the broader value of GEO. The European Commission agreed with this statement.

Mr Rum suggested distinguishing between the physical location of a project office and the governance of a particular Work Plan Task such as GFOI, noting that GEO BON, for example, has both a steering committee and a project office located in South Africa.

The Secretariat Director explained that GFO is a Task in the Work Plan and consists of two components, GFOI and FCT. Within GFOI there is an R&D activity. There was an ambiguity concerning the link between the GFOI R&D activities and FCT. The Task Lead recommended dropping the acronym GFO and placing FCT within GFOI as its R&D component. GEO BON does provide a precedent. He proposed that GFOI present a draft plan to the Executive Committee at its 25th meeting in order to receive guidance about how to organize the governance of GFOI. Guidance from the Post-2015 Working Group should also be invited.

The Chair concluded the discussion and asked the Secretariat to take note of the issues raised.

Action 24.5: Executive Committee to invite the Post-2015 Working Group to make a recommendation about the role and governance of global initiatives within GEO and to include this in its report to the Committee's 25th meeting in July.

Action 24.6: The GFOI Task team, together with the Secretariat, to present a draft plan on its governance structure to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

5 PROGRESS ON GEOGLAM (DOCUMENT 8 – FOR INFORMATION)

Mr João Soares of the Secretariat presented the document on the GEO Global Agricultural Monitoring initiative. He explained that the French government had invited GEO to present a proposal to the G20 on launching an action plan on food price volatility and agriculture. He described the development of the initiative over the past year and informed the meeting that the project document is to be finalized and presented to the G20 by the end of the week.

The United States asked for more information about the initiative's communications channel with the G20 and about the G20's expectations of GEO in terms of fund raising. Mr Soares explained that the main point of contact has been the French Ministry of Agriculture; now that Mexico has taken over the chair of the G20 it will be Mexico's Ministry of Agriculture. The Secretariat Director added that the G20 expected three things from GEO: the provision of a governance framework, coordination of the provision of space observations, and support for fund raising. Unlike with the GFOI, the necessary funds have not been provided upfront.

The United States asked whether other representatives at the meeting were in contact with their G20 delegations on this issue.

Brazil said GEO has a greater stake in seeing GEOGLAM work than do other potential host organizations. The quality of the technical work will be critical to GEO's success. However, there are not enough satellite data for achieving success before 2013. GEOGLAM needs to make the best possible use of the next generation of remote sensing satellites. The Secretariat Director considered the current remote sensing technologies to be good enough for the purposes of the initiative but otherwise agreed with Brazil's assessment. He stressed the high level of the people contributing to GEOGLAM.

The United Kingdom said that the section on budget did not contain much detail. He had discussed the issue back home with the agricultural team for the G20 and found that they had been taken aback by the proposed budget of \$40 million. More information on the GEOGLAM budget and existing resources would be helpful.

The Secretariat Director said that the team recognized that the budget contained in the document was not sufficiently detailed for actual fund raising.

Canada agreed that there was more work to be done on the proposal. Canada's contributions have thus far been mainly in-kind; it has not yet explored what its financial contribution could be.

Germany said that it fully support the GEO function of data coordination. GEO has a clear role in bringing together all of the relevant players. However when it comes to the budget Germany has the same questions as Canada and the UK and would like a better understanding of GEO's role in mobilizing funds.

The United States said that the document represented fabulous work. Of concern was the scale of the proposed budget relative to the scale of GEO's current resources. Mr Soares said that after one year of preparation the team now needed to go back to the G20 with a detailed work plan and get their feedback, including their guidance on fund-raising. This process should conclude by June, although activities for launching the initiative will continue in the meantime. The Secretariat Director said that the team was still formulating a work plan that would be worth \$40 million and that would support AMIS.

The Chair thanked the Secretariat for the efforts being made on GEOGLAM and asked it to take note of all the comments made.

On the following day, the United States reported that awareness about GEOGLAM was high within the US government's senior levels. The US recommended that the project be conceived as something more scalable and that the document provide a set of options that could be considered for funding, rather than a portfolio of activities at one proposed funding level. It would also be useful to see more clearly how GEOGLAM could evolve over a period of five or six years. She was pleased to see GEO

coming to the attention of important circles within the US government. A clearer picture of what GEOGLAM could become, and a set of more flexible options for funding, would be more attractive to people at the working level of the G-20 process.

6 AFRIGE OSS – AN INITIATIVE TO REINFORCE GEOSS IN AFRICA (DOCUMENT 9 - FOR INFORMATION)

The Secretariat Director explained that, while GEO has organized regional activities in the Asia-Pacific and in the Americas, the same is not true for Africa. There do exist many activities in Africa relating to Earth observations, including those supported by AMESD and the EC. However, they tend to be poorly coordinated, and many African countries are not GEO members. The purpose of AfriGEOSS is to reinforce the position of GEO in Africa. He noted that GFOI has succeeded in attracting new African members for GEO. The African Union has expressed interest in AfriGEOSS.

Mr Humbulani Mudau of the Secretariat presented the document. Based on guidance from the Executive Committee, the Secretariat proposes to distribute the document to all GEO Members and Participating Organizations in Africa. It will be crucial for GEO contributors in Africa to take ownership of the initiative and to make resources available so that it succeeds. The initiative will remain fully aligned with the Work Plan and will be implemented through its various Tasks. The document was informed by the Strategic Targets, including the Data Management Targets. It takes stock of existing investments in Africa and identifies gaps.

The Chair applauded the initiative. New Zealand welcomed it as a valuable way to bring more developing countries into GEO. New Zealand would like to explore with the Secretariat the idea of a similar project in the South Pacific, where many countries are not yet engaged with GEO.

Brazil thanked the Secretariat and South Africa, observing that South Africa's leadership has made an enormous contribution to putting GEO on the map in Africa. He also thanked China, which is working with Brazil on CBERS to make more data available in the region. He asked the EC to clarify the data policy that will be adopted by GMES. He noted that Brazil worked with FAO to assist the Democratic Republic of Congo to demonstrate last year at the Durban climate change conference the first national inventory.

Morocco said that it would be a plus for the project to engage the African Union, and it could also gain by being linked to GEOGLAM, since food security is such a critical issue for Africa. Morocco would be pleased to support the AfriGEOSS sub-regional workshop for North Africa.

The European Commission explained that the GMES data policy was under development by the Commission, but that it was subject to scrutiny by the European Parliament and Council. The EC's position is that access to Sentinel data should be full and open. However, some GMES data is paid for from national funds and not EC funds, so there is a need to develop a comprehensive GMES data policy covering all sources of GMES data.

China said it regarded AfriGEOSS as an important step towards establishing a truly global GEOSS. Priority areas for initial actions could include capacity building, infrastructure, and pilot projects for societal benefits such as food security and water. These initial actions can be achieved through existing initiatives. Synergies and coordination with the African Union and others is important, as is work to update and expand the network of receiving stations.

Germany welcomed the initiative and its focus on strengthening coordination in Africa. Germany has started major regional activities on science and capacity building, with projects in Southern and Western Africa. It would be happy to analyze how these may be relevant to and supportive of AfriGEOSS.

Korea reported on work by the Korean International Cooperation Agency in funding various projects in Africa.

The Secretariat Director confirmed that the African Union will be involved in AfriGEOSS, and that GEOGLAM and the African Water Cycle Initiative will also contribute. The receiving stations, data centers and fibre optic cables established around Africa will also be important. The Secretariat will be pleased to work with New Zealand on a South Pacific initiative. Mr Mudau confirmed that each sub-region will identify the themes it would like the workshops to focus on; East Africa has decided that its priority is agriculture and food security.

The Chair invited the Secretariat to take the comments into consideration when it revises and distributes the document.

Action 24.7: New Zealand to explore with the Secretariat the launch of regional GEO activities in the South Pacific.

7 REPORT OF THE DATA SHARING WORKING GROUP (DOCUMENT 10 – FOR ACCEPTANCE)

Mr Alan Edwards, Co-Chair of the Data Sharing Working Group (DSWG), presented the document. He recalled that the Working Group had been established by GEO-VIII and that its members were nominated by GEO Principals from Members and Participating Organizations. He conveyed the Group's concerns about its somewhat geographically unbalanced membership and its request that the Executive Committee encourage greater participation. In addition the Group still needs to identify a fourth Co-Chair. The DSWG also requested guidance from the Committee concerning the proposed outputs and activities set out in draft Task Sheet ID-01.

The Chair reiterated that data sharing is the “core and soul” of GEO. The United States said she was pleased with the Working Group's progress, endorsed the terms of reference and urged all Committee members to reach out through their caucuses for more nominees to the Working Group. South Africa asked whether there had yet been any effort to monitor the use of the data available through the GEOSS Common Infrastructure. Brazil welcomed the creation of the Working Group and proposed several small edits to the document.

Canada supported the Working Group and hoped to be able to participate in it. He welcomed the terms of reference and the objectives. A good understanding is needed of the resources that will be required to sustain GEOSS post 2015, and the Working Group can provide useful inputs on this.

New Zealand welcomed the emphasis that GEO has put on this issue and endorsed the terms of reference. He stressed the importance of capturing metrics and measuring the value of open data. Noting the need for more representation from the Asia-Pacific region, he volunteered to serve as Co-Chair of the Working Group.

Germany welcomed the report and the terms of reference. Regarding the Task sheet, he suggested considering the additional category of data that is free for scientific and educational use.

The United Kingdom endorsed the terms of reference. Regarding the Working Group's intention to reach out to the Infrastructure Implementation Board, he suggested it could be useful to reach out to the other two Implementation Boards as well. He agreed that the reference to metrics should be maintained.

China suggested that it is important to promote the ability of the Data Sharing Principles to deliver societal benefits. Engaging some users in the Working Group could generate some good suggestions on this. China is willing to support the Working Group and to assign more experts to it.

Brazil described the historical development of the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI). He believed that an additional category for data that is free for scientific and educational uses would not work well.

Mr Edwards responded by saying that he viewed the GCI as an envelope containing the key components of registries, a broker, a portal and a clearing house. The IIB has the major technical

responsibility for implementing the Data-CORE, licensing schemes, monitoring, and so forth. The Working Group has already established a good working relationship with the IIB, and it is important that the two work closely together, as well as with the Tasks. The outputs of the Working Group need to be carried forward through technical implementation. While recognizing that many data do not qualify for the Data-CORE, GEO should not lose focus on the CORE. The Working Group will study how to incorporate and tag those data that have restrictions.

Brazil said the Group should work on a set of licenses that address data to which access is restricted but that are still a part of GEOSS. Expanding the number of restricted datasets that are available through GEOSS is indeed also important.

Germany clarified that his concern was not Germany's data policy, but rather that there are many providers with commercial data available for scientific and educational uses, and that these data should be accessible via GEOSS. This needs to be better captured in the Task sheet.

The United Kingdom offered a few textual proposals for the document.

The Chair concluded that data sharing is a complex challenge, and he noted that even within the same government there are often many disagreements amongst sister agencies about this issue. The report was accepted with the changes recommended during the discussion.

8 UPDATE FROM THE POST-2015 WORKING GROUP (DOCUMENT 11 – FOR INFORMATION)

Mr Michael Williams of the Secretariat presented the item.

The United States noted that the Working Group included many representatives from the space community and suggested that a more varied membership was needed. The Working Group should focus on the scope and purpose of GEOSS and not just the institutional aspects of GEO.

The United Kingdom supported the process and the Terms of Reference that had been established by Plenary. It was important that this effort engage the wider GEO community and consider their views.

The European Commission recalled that the Working Group should provide an interim report to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

The Secretariat Director agreed that the Group included many members from the space community and suggested it would be useful to have more UN agencies involved.

The Chair said that GEO has made great progress but is still far from achieving its goal. It is important to clearly define the relationship between GEO, its Members and Participating Organizations, and the providers of relevant resources in order to ensure the development of a useful GEOSS. He looked forward to seeing the Working Group's report at the next meeting.

9 TRANSITION PROCESS FOR THE GEO SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR

The United States applauded Mr Achache as a vital and dynamic leader and, on behalf of the Executive Committee and the entire GEO community, asked him to accept their heartfelt thanks for his energy and accomplishments and for the great work by the Secretariat.

Mr Achache thanked the Committee and said that it had been an honour to serve and a fantastic experience. He expressed his thanks to past and present Secretariat staff and Committee members, and he assured the incoming Director of his full support in ensuring a smooth transition.

The Committee members then shared their memories and appreciations of Mr Achache's tenure. Following this they held an *in camera* session.

10 UPDATE ON PREPARATION FOR RIO+20

Japan described its efforts to have the issue of Earth observations and GEO included in the main section of the Summit document, but without support from other countries this did not prove possible. However, the current draft does include a reference to GEOSS in the climate and disaster sections. Japan is supporting an 18m² GEOSS booth in the Japanese pavilion in the exhibition area; the Secretariat and CEOS are also both participating. In addition, Japan plans to organize a high-level seminar on the unique role of GEOSS.

The Secretariat Director thanked Japan for supporting GEO's visibility at Rio. The fact that other GEO members did not match Japan's efforts to highlight GEOSS in the summit declaration suggests that GEO delegations did not consult with their national colleagues on the Rio delegations.

The European Commission said that it had succeeded in including two mentions of GEO in the EU submission, but that these references did not survive the negotiations on the zero draft. It is now working to reinstate them. The EC plans to organize a GEO event in its pavilion, on a different day than the event being organized by Japan.

Brazil agreed that it had indeed been difficult to include GEOSS or data sharing in the Rio document. The drafting process has been centralized within the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. The key focus of the text is on the UN institutions themselves and on strengthening or transforming the CSD and UNEP.

Japan said that in addition to the UN institutional issues the summit and the declaration are also focussing on the Green Economy, which was relevant for many GEO activities.

New Zealand said that through the UN Initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM) a presentation has been proposed regarding the use of geoinformation by South Pacific Island nations; should it materialise, he will try to ensure that this presentation also addresses GEOSS.

The United States observed that UN processes can be difficult, with many agencies converging. Rio had a focus on UNEP and, closer to the GEO space, the Eye on Earth summit and initiatives.

The Secretariat Director indicated that it would be better to focus on promoting "GEOSS" in Rio rather than "GEO" to avoid confusion with UNEP's Global Environmental Outlook.

South Africa informed the meeting that its delegation in Rio would have an exhibition booth on legacy projects from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), which was held in Johannesburg in 2002. South Africa's GEO delegation has asked its national Rio delegation to look at how GEOSS could be profiled there. South Africa will also work with the EC and Japan on side events.

The Chair urged the GEO community to do more to improve GEO's visibility in Rio.

New Zealand reported that there had been positive comments about GEO and GEOSS in the literature emanating from the International Society for Digital Earth. New Zealand will host the next ISDE Summit, which will focus on natural disasters, and he suggested that the Executive Committee and the Secretariat could consider how GEO can be actively involved.

The Secretariat Director welcomed the intervention by South Africa and reminded the meeting that the idea for GEO, and of the importance of Earth observation for sustainable development, had been born in Johannesburg at the WSSD.

Canada asked whether the Secretariat could provide some boilerplate text to Committee members that they could use in attempting to influence the Rio declaration at this late date. The Secretariat Director offered to work on this, perhaps focussing on the message that "you can't manage what you can't measure."

Japan summed up the proposed actions for Rio: all Committee members should explore how to introduce GEOSS into the Rio text, the EC and Japan will host side events on 18 and 19 June (just

before the 20 June opening of the summit), and all members are invited to contribute to the GEOSS exhibition booth that Japan is organizing together with the Secretariat and CEOS.

The Chair welcomed the suggestions made and reiterated the need for all members to do their best to promote GEOSS in Rio. Japan, the EC, the Secretariat and others will work together to make the various GEO activities in Rio a success.

The United States endorsed the efforts to have GEO included in the Rio declaration. She suggested that the Secretariat look at the current draft of the declaration and create a one-pager to illustrate the relevance of GEOSS and GEO to the 2002 Rio Earth Summit and 2012 WSSD Johannesburg Summit follow-up and to the work anticipated in the Rio+20 declaration. Thumbnails of exemplar projects such as GEOGLAM could be included.

The United Kingdom agreed with this proposal. He noted the importance of the current paragraphs 86 and 87 on climate and disasters and of paragraph 110 as highlighted by the EC. GEOSS has a great deal to offer in terms of taking these issues forward. At the same time, it may be difficult at this stage in the process to propose new text. He suggested that it would be helpful if Japan and the EC would circulate as soon as possible the texts that they have proposed.

Action 24.8: Secretariat to prepare a one-pager on how GEO and GEOSS can support the Rio process.

Action 24.9: Japan and the European Commission to circulate their inputs to the Rio declaration negotiating process to the rest of the Executive Committee.

11 UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS FOR GEO-IX

Brazil reported that the Secretariat had visited the Plenary venue in Foz do Iguacu. Two attractive hotels are currently under consideration. In response to a question from the EC, he confirmed that they are both convention hotels that can handle side events and the exhibition.

The Secretariat Director said that Canada is still considering whether it can offer to host GEO-X and the ministerial summit in 2013, but it is not yet able to confirm; Committee members may want to start exploring alternate venues. Canada said that the federal budget would soon be announced and that the delegation continued to discuss the opportunity to host GEO with its Minister.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Secretariat Director confirmed that the 25th meeting of the Executive Committee would take place in Geneva on 12-13 July. The Co-Chair from South Africa suggested that preparations for such future events as the 2013 Ministerial should begin as early as possible to ensure good results.

Action 24.10: Secretariat to draft brief paper on the possible focus and key issues for the 2013 Ministerial for a future meeting of the Executive Committee.

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