

Executive Summary
28th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 16-17 July 2013
(As accepted at the 29th Executive Committee Meeting)

This Document which includes both an Executive Summary of the meeting and a full report of the meeting is submitted for Executive Committee approval.

This Document has been corrected in track changes to reflect that the work described on pages 1, 10, 17 and 26 was carried out by individual consultants under Special Services Agreements, not by Space Bridges / Science Bridges Sarl.

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair representing the Peoples Republic of China, Mr Cao Jianlin.

- The US noted that Document 7 (Sprint to Summit 2013-2014) should be for *information*;
- Secretariat to include an Executive Summary (this text) for future Executive Committee Summary Reports;
- Action 27.10: “budget reserve” changed to “overhead”;
- Action 27.11: “working capital reserve” changed to “working capital fund”;
- The Chair noted all action items from the previous Executive Committee closed with the exception of Action 27.1 (private sector forum) which is continued ~~as Action by Science Bridges Sarl~~ as described under agenda item 4, and Action 27.7 (options for engaging IT/Data Management specialist) which is continued as Secretariat Action 28.16.

2 POST-2015 WORKING GROUP (PWG)

The Chair concluded that the Executive Committee would like to see a stronger narrative for GEO as a next step in the development of documents for the Geneva Ministerial.

Action 28.1: PWG to complete topic papers (for information) for Plenary information, in association with Document 4 (Post-2015 Working Group Update). [29th Executive Committee].

Action 28.2: PWG to modify Recommendation 4.2 (Governance) in Document 4 (Post-2015 Working Group Update), to remove reference to the private sector. [29th Executive Committee].

3 MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP (MWG)

The Chair requested that the MWG and PWG Co-chairs, and members of the Implementation Plan Scenario (IPS) team, produce a Ministerial document plan for Executive Committee review.

Action 28.3: Secretariat to further triage showcases (numbers of applicants included in each to be reduced), especially under theme 4. [29th Executive Committee].

Action 28.4: MWG to modify Ministerial Declaration for clarity and conciseness. [29th Executive Committee].

Action 28.5: Sprint to Summit to focus its efforts on the GEO Portal and its usability as a matter of priority. [29th Executive Committee].

4 UPDATE ON PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

The Chair noted the Committee's support for the methodology and schedule proposed by the Secretariat, starting with the immediate survey of Committee members to facilitate an informed selection of individuals to form a Think Tank, which will meet in October, followed by a Private Sector Forum to likely be held in November. The outcome of the Forum will be a series of recommendations for GEO's engagement with the private sector, to be presented at the GEO-X Plenary. The process should also take into account documents being produced for the Geneva Ministerial.

Action 28.6: PWG to clarify definition of "private sector" in Recommendation 4.4 (Engagement with the Private and Not-for-Profit Sectors) [29th Executive Committee].

5 GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION

The Chair concluded by noting the Committee accepted the assessment methodology of the Implementation Boards (IBs) in principle, but that more detail should be provided in the next assessment with respect to implications of the ratings.

- GEO should consider how its Strategic Targets for the post-2015 period could be aligned with the human development goals of the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda (including post Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] and Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]).

Action 28.7: Secretariat to add more policy-level implications in communicating highlights of Task progress. [29th Executive Committee].

Action 28.8: Secretariat to revise Document 11 (Renewal of Implementation Board Membership), to include clear criteria defining active Board membership [29th Executive Committee].

Action 28.9: Secretariat to provide recommendations on top eight IB candidates to Executive Committee with respect to IB applications. [29th Executive Committee].

6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) WG

Issues identified by the 4th M&E WG Evaluation Report include:

- Difficult standards against which to evaluate progress;
- Exchanges with Task Leads result in overly optimistic assessments ;
- Difficult for evaluation team to identify all GEO achievements;
- Gaps between action necessary to achieve Targets and actual Task activities not managed adequately;
- User engagement not evident.

Action 28.10: Secretariat to request nomination from the Executive Committee for support in drafting the Committee response to the 4th GEOSS Evaluation Report . [29th Executive Committee].

Action 29.11: M&E WG and Secretariat to revise Document 13 (Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations), to provide details on classification with respect to red (“unable to assess”) and yellow colour-code categories. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

7 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

- Georgia has become the 90th Member of GEO;
- External audit showed the Secretariat’s financial statements were correct, in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS);
- Establishment of Working Capital Fund (WCF), building on surpluses from each previous fiscal year, necessary to cover Secretariat operations at the beginning of each year given timing of Trust Fund contributions;
- Promotion of GEO a challenge since it is not a typical brand – rather it is an idea that organizes a process, supported by resources whose efforts facilitate results that GEO can never claim to own.

Action 28.12: Secretariat to initiate practice of separate reporting of meetings for special initiatives in Document 14 (Secretariat Operations Report). *[29th Executive Committee]*.

Action 28.13: Secretariat (as a practice for future reports) to include separate category for service contracts and consultant expenditures in Document 16 (Mid-term Report on Income and Expenditure). *[29th Executive Committee]*.

Action 28.14: Secretariat to revise Document 17 (Management of the GEO Trust Fund), to indicate that establishment of Working Capital Fund, building on surpluses from each previous fiscal year, is subject to approval at GEO-X Plenary (retroactive to 1 January 2014). *[29th Executive Committee]*.

Action 28.15: Secretariat to revise Document 17 (Management of the GEO Trust Fund), to provide strengthened rationale for 15% overhead. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

Action 28.16: Secretariat to identify staffing possibilities for managing the GEOSS DataCORE in conjunction with GCI. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Secretariat to make recommendations for organizations seeking PO status.

Action 28.17: Secretariat to contact the Asia-Oceania Caucus for nomination to replace the New Zealand seat on the Executive Committee. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

Action 28.18: Secretariat to provide completed submitted application forms, for consideration by Committee. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

- **Virtual Executive Committee** Co-Chairs meeting scheduled for 17 September, (now changed to 18 September) to review Ministerial documents issued on 30 August.
- **Physical Executive Committee** meeting scheduled for week of 28 October, (may change) for final review of Ministerial documents.

Summary Report
28th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 16-17 July 2013
(As accepted at the 29th Executive Committee Meeting)

Day 1: Meeting commenced at 10:00

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair representing the Peoples Republic of China. Mr Cao Jianlin welcomed all Executive Committee members to the meeting and observed that the agenda identified many challenges, particularly charting the roadmap to post-2015 and the Ministerial Summit. He underlined the need for GEO to engage with the private sector, and noted that China, with the support of the Asia-Oceania Caucus, has been actively fulfilling GEO objectives across Asia and African corridors. He encouraged the Members of the Committee to participate actively, to ensure a productive meeting.

The GEO Co-chair representing the European Commission (EC), Mr Rudolf Strohmeier, expressed his pleasure at participating in this Executive Committee given its importance in the planning for the Geneva Ministerial. He noted that it was up to the GEO community to fully prepare and bring the relevant messages to the Ministerial in order to secure support for GEO and GEOSS in the decade beyond 2015. He reminded the Committee that the messages must be clear, have substance and relevance, and illustrate convincingly how GEO has started to deliver societal benefits, in order to persuade the Ministers to continue supporting GEO.

The GEO Co-chair representing South Africa, Mr Phil Mjwara, welcomed all Members of the Executive Committee and Secretariat, and called attention to the fact that Ministerial preparations needed to take centre stage at this meeting. In particular, work will be needed to harmonize the various documents that have been produced by the Ministerial Working Group (MWG), the Post-2015 Working Group (PWG) and the Implementation Plan Scenarios (IPS) team into a single story line. He also emphasized the need for the Committee to take a critical look at the areas requiring attention in order to move GEO forward. He concluded by thanking the Working Groups and Secretariat for their excellent work in preparing the meeting.

The GEO Co-chair representing the United States (US), Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the Department of the Interior (DOI), Ms Anne Castle, expressed pleasure at participating in this meeting of the Executive Committee. She noted that DOI oversees the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) which operates the Landsat program, a program that has been seminal in introducing and promoting data sharing of satellite imagery, a key precept of GEO. The DOI also operates the SilvaCarbon project, and has numerous other connections with GEO. She remarked that as GEO turns into a more mature organization, the community should take a step back and draw inspiration from all its successes as it seeks to deliver a compelling case to Ministers. She concurred on the need to forge a single narrative from the various Ministerial documents, one that would set out a clear direction for the approval of ministers and be pivotal in the life of this organization.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1 – for acceptance)

The Secretariat Director, Ms Barbara Ryan, proposed the following modifications to the agenda:

- In order to accommodate a briefing from the US via teleconference, Agenda Item 5.2 (Progress on GEOGLAM Implementation) be moved to after the afternoon coffee break on Day 2;
- In the interest of fostering a unified vision, Agenda Items 2.1 (Post-2015 Working Group Update) and 2.2 (Draft Post-2015 Implementation Plan Scenarios) both be presented in succession, with open discussion held until afterwards; Agenda Items 3.1 (Ministerial Working Group Update) and 3.3 (Sprint to Summit [2013-2014]) be treated in similar fashion.

With respect to Agenda Item 7.1 (Secretariat Operations Report), she suggested it would be good business practice to review applications for status as Participating Organizations (POs) as they were received, especially when numerous, rather than retaining them all until the Committee meeting just prior to Plenary. She also then suggested a roundtable of introductions since several Executive Committee and Secretariat members were new.

The US noted that Document 7 (Sprint to Summit 2013-2014) should be for *information* as opposed to *consultation*.

The agenda was accepted, noting the proposed modifications.

1.2 Summary Report of the 27th Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2 – for acceptance)

Secretariat Scientific Officer, Dr Douglas Cripe, introduced the document. He noted that there had been some feedback from Committee members that a more concise summary would be preferable to a detailed report. Conversely, some Principals and Principal-alternates not present at a given Committee meeting found the details helpful in following the flow of the discussion. The US observed that an Executive Summary could be added, while retaining the full report. South Africa and China concurred.

The document was then accepted with no further comment.

1.3 Review of Actions from Previous Executive Committee Meetings (Document 3 – for consultation)

The Secretariat Director introduced the Document, noting that many of the items requiring action from the Secretariat had been responded to through documents being reviewed at this Committee meeting, and thus, pending discussion at this session, could be closed. In this regard, Action 27.3 had been closed with the submission of Document 5. She also noted two corrections in Action Item terminology:

Action 28.10: “budget reserve” changed to “overhead”.

Action 28.11: “working capital reserve” changed to “working capital fund”.

Secretariat Expert Dr Espen Volden then reviewed the five options in the Annex to the document for engaging an information technology (IT) specialist to help with development of the GEOSS DataCORE and GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI). The EC remarked that, in the interest of not losing the work already achieved and demonstrating to the community what GEO can accomplish, as an interim solution, it was willing to continue providing IT support part-time for another six months. South Africa commented that it considers this type of activity as institution building and thus core to the work that GEO should be doing. This task requires a serious commitment, and South Africa offered to explore how it might respond with a longer-term solution. The US stated that it saw value in having a dedicated person in the Secretariat to oversee this activity, and wondered what the cost would

be for this option. The Director replied that the job functions would determine the grade level and she would supply a cost estimate before the end of the meeting.

The Director sought clarification from the Committee that all Actions could be considered closed, pending discussion over the next two days, to which the Chair concurred.

2 POST-2015 WORKING GROUP

2.1 Post-2015 Working Group Update (Document 4 – for consultation)

Post-2015 WG Co-chair, Mr Peter Colohan, presented the document in which Part A provides the framework, and Part B the recommendations, for GEO post-2015, as called for in the group's original charter. He noted the PWG had been working for over 20 months and that the text under each recommendation has been carefully worked out by nominated representatives of GEO Members to the PWG. These recommendations therefore represent the consensus view thus far on the range of work that GEO should be accomplishing in the decade beyond 2015. What the document does not address is the scale of investment needed to do this work. In his view, Part B (the recommendations) is nearly complete whereas Part A (the vision) needs more work. He concluded by noting the next step for the PWG is to draft a series of information papers on items such as governance, management and architecture (GCI) as reflected in Recommendation 4.

The Director then suggested allowing time for any clarification questions before moving to the next agenda item. The EC queried as to the intent of including the private sector in the latter portion of Recommendation 4.2, and whether this implied the private sector might become involved in the governance of GEO. Mr Colohan replied that the intent was to identify a forum where the private sector could interact with GEO, but agreed that this engagement should take place at the technical level, not at the formal level. The UK concurred and requested the words mentioning the private sector be stricken from Recommendation 4.2.

2.2 Draft Post-2015 Implementation Plan Scenarios (Document 5 – for consultation)

Ms Yana Gevorgyan presented Document 5, outlining three scenarios of engagement for review by the GEO Ministers in preparation for the drafting of a post-2015 Implementation Plan. She noted that the scenarios were presented as an “à la carte” series in which certain choices can be made in addition to elements considered as core to GEOSS implementation, such as the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI).

Discussion:

South Africa expressed its gratitude to the team for its work, and reminded everyone that it takes time to sort through the complexities and build an organization such as GEO before eventually identifying its added value. GEO needs to mature as an institution, not continue business as usual, and thus these scenarios help model the way GEO should evolve. However, the “why” of GEO's existence is lacking, and South Africa proposed combining both documents 4 and 5 to respond convincingly to the question: what would happen if GEO ceased to exist? The EC supported the comments from South Africa, saying the case for why GEO should continue needed to be stated more strongly. The EC suggested Part A could provide the “*chapeau*” for a new narrative that would link together all parts and be penned by a single author. Japan commented that Part B (Recommendations) should be stated clearly enough to deliver strong messages to the Ministers, and that the scenarios should be treated separately from the Recommendations. The US suggested that a comparison with the way the world was ten years ago and the difference that GEO has made would provide a strong case for its continuation, and thus the “Case for GEO” document should be folded into Part A with the scenarios linked to the Recommendations. The US agreed on the need for a single author and offered the services of Mr Colohan for this purpose. Nigeria echoed the need to have clear, tangible results of

GEO benefits to society to present to Ministers when asking for support. The UK likewise agreed on the need to develop a stronger, single narrative to respond to the “why” of GEO’s continuation, its added value, and how it is used. Additionally, the narrative needs to include references to economic growth in order to attract the attention of Ministers. South Korea emphasized the need for clarity in the scenarios and showing clear and tangible achievements and benefits to society if GEO wants the support of Ministers. South Korea further recommended leveraging diplomatic channels as much as possible to convey key messages regarding GEO post-2015. Canada, Estonia, Japan, and China all supported the idea of merging the work of the PWG and IPS into a single document, to be framed in an introductory case for GEO, and on the notion of a single pen-holder. Canada added that, in its view, higher-level examples of the added value of GEO would include the creation of the GEO community, infrastructure and data sharing. Japan supported the idea of a single Ministerial document comprised of individual components, while cautioning against developing the scenarios without private sector’s involvement. Also, the concept of trans-disciplinarity is important if GEO is to understand what the stakeholders want and be able to contribute to their needs in a comprehensive way. South Africa emphasized that the links between GEO, GEOSS and other initiatives, especially those in connection with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) needs to be clarified and suggested the formation of some type of platform to explore the reinforcement of engagement with UN agencies. The EC cautioned that the GEO community should avoid being too precise in its formulations, but rather raise awareness of certain consequences connected to choices with respect to potential future pathways for GEO, and then seek the opinion of the Ministers.

The Chair concluded by observing the Executive Committee was indicating, in principle and spirit, that a stronger narrative for GEO is needed as the next step in the development of documents for the Ministerial, and asked the Secretariat to take note of the comments made by the Committee as the Secretariat revises the drafts.

Action 28.1: PWG to complete topic papers (for information) for Plenary information, in association with Document 4 (Post-2015 Working Group Update). [29th Executive Committee].

Action 28.2: PWG to modify Recommendation 4.2 (Governance) in Document 4 (Post-2015 Working Group Update), to remove reference to the private sector. [29th Executive Committee].

3 MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP

The Director suggested that agenda items 3.1 and 3.2 be presented in succession, with discussion held until afterwards.

3.1 Ministerial Working Group Update (Document 6 –for consultation)

Dr José Romero, Head of Section of the Federal Department of Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications (DETEC), Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Switzerland, delivered the MWG presentation. He noted that the draft text of the declaration had been prepared in consultation with the PWG and IPS, and established the link to the work of the PWG by referring to an endorsement of its recommendations by the GEO-X Plenary. The document contained an expanded “Case for GEO” and the theme of the Ministerial Declaration was: Observe, Share, Inform, Act. He underscored that the major outcomes of the Summit would be Ministerial confirmation of GEO continuance beyond 2015 and the mandate to develop a second “Implementation Plan 2025” along the strategic lines approved by the GEO-X Plenary (based on the work of the PWG and IPS team). He also noted that the MWG proposed a preliminary program that started on the afternoon/evening of 16 January, and culminated in the approval of the declaration by lunchtime of 17 January. The program included five short (three minute) videos, showcasing specific themes to attract political attention (page 10). He concluded by informing the Committee that Switzerland was completing the internal procedures to extend to GEO Members’ Ministers the formal invitation to attend the GEO Summit.

3.2 Sprint to Summit (2013-2014) (Document 7 – for consultation)

Ms Yana Gevorgyan, Co-chair Representative of US GEO, presented the document, in which the Implementation Boards outlined a set of enhancements to GEOSS and the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI), resulting in operational improvements by the Geneva Ministerial in January 2014. To that end, a set of actions were identified at the Work Plan Symposium targeting particular GCI functionalities and user interfaces, linkages with existing Community Portals, and a more robust dialogue with the Communities of Practice and application/user communities. Suggested objectives included improvement of the GEO Web Portal, and means to search data by keyword, time, geography, and full and open access (DataCORE); improve the presentation of search results to users; single sign-on user registration; and verification of registration and remote inventories by time and geography through a single, consistent user interface.

Discussion:

Canada expressed appreciation for the work and suggested the Case for GEO, which should be folded into Part A of the PWG document, could be shortened while focusing on items such as the nature of GEO, its benefits for the planet, what has been accomplished, and plans for the future. The EC noted that the proposed Ministerial slogan was very similar to the one used during the Beijing Summit and should be revised. It also recommended that the number of points in the Ministerial Declaration be sharply reduced, and that the showcases reflect achievements referenced in the PWG/IPS documents to send a consistent and powerful message. South Africa added it would like to see the video showcase selection process centre on two criteria, which are: 1) demonstration of the coordination efforts of GEO; and 2) whether GEOSS is influencing decision-makers. Japan remarked it would like to see more language from the Rio+20 UN Conference included in the Ministerial Declaration and will propose text to the MWG in this regard. It also recommended reducing the number of showcase themes in order to clarify the message to the Ministers, and requested the Secretariat to prepare stories illustrating the themes and to select the proposals in line with these stories, in particular for theme 4. China stated the need to harmonize the Case for GEO document with the others, especially Part B of the PWG recommendations document. Nigeria was concerned that the Ministers have a clear idea of what they are being asked to commit to, and whether GEOSS implementation should be considered an indefinite process. The US echoed Japan's remarks regarding the showcase themes and the need to reduce the number of messages. The US also called for consolidation among the documents produced by the various groups, noting that only the Declaration will be negotiated at the Ministerial level. The UK agreed on the need to shorten the Declaration. South Africa shared Nigeria's concerns and called for the development of a document plan, one that would weave together the arguments for the continuation of GEO embedded in the various documents. Japan supported this suggestion, and remarked that the characteristics of the different documents should be clarified. In its view, Part B of the PWG should be clearer and more concise while the Case for GEO should be merged with part A of PWG document. China also supported the call for a unified set of documents that would inspire confidence with the Ministers to secure GEO's future. The US observed there are several real successes that demonstrate the vision of GEO is being realized: the default is now data openness; GEO interoperability is being demonstrated through the Architecture Implementation Pilots (AIPs); a vast network of projects on GEOSS implementation is advancing; and the coordination of observations has been improved - the issue is how to frame these successes in a convincing way politically. The Director commented that, to underscore the default mode of data sharing, the Geneva Ministerial could be used as a platform to announce on open data sharing policy from Copernicus, similar to the Landsat archive announcement at the Cape Town Ministerial in 2007. The UK cautioned that we must be careful not to oversell what GEO can deliver given the current fiscal climate and Secretariat limitations. The US agreed, noting that the tradition of large and grand structures to accomplish large and grand ideas is now being replaced with a lightweight structure that involves private sector both of which speak to the strength of GEO. The lesson learned is that GEO should articulate this difference and be honest about the impact the financial crisis has had on realizing GEOSS. The US further

endorsed the concept of developing a document plan, and offered to lead an ad hoc team to produce a draft for the Committee's consideration the following day. The Chair requested that the MWG and PWG Co-chairs, and members of the IPS team, produce a Ministerial document plan before the conclusion of the Committee meeting.

Responding to the Chair's request, the Ministerial document plan was presented by the ad hoc team consisting of the MWG and PWG Co-chairs, and members of the IPS team on the second day of the Committee meeting. The Executive Committee accepted it and agreed on the position of each element of the Ministerial portfolio: 1) the Ministerial Declaration-for adoption by Ministers; 2) GEO vision for 2025 built from the Case for GEO, consensus recommendations and information papers- for acceptance by the GEO Plenary; and 3) Pathway for 2025 recast from Implementation Plan Scenarios-for information.

Action 28.3: Secretariat to further triage to reduce showcase showcases (numbers of applicants included in each to be reduced), especially under theme 4. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

Action 28.4: MWG to modify Ministerial Declaration for clarity and conciseness. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

Action 28.5: Sprint to Summit to focus its efforts on the GEO Portal and its usability as a matter of priority. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

4 UPDATE ON PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT (DOCUMENT 8 – FOR CONSULTATION)

The Director introduced this topic by noting the private sector discussion emerged from the GEO-IX Plenary, recalling that the private sector was broad, encompassing the commercial sector (itself broad), foundations, development banks, not-for-profit groups and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). She noted that the services of [Mr Julien Pitton, External Consultant](#), ~~Space Bridges Sàrl~~ had been engaged to help with framing the strategy of engaging the private sector. She also reminded the Committee that GEO already engages with the private sector in the form of academia, commercial groups (e.g. OGC) and development banks (e.g. Asian development bank in rice modeling projects of GEOGLAM).

Mr Julien Pitton, ~~Director of Financing Strategy and Governance at Space Bridges Sàrl~~, presented the document, and observed that since GEO had decided to open up and engage with private stakeholders, it will need to do some preparation with respect to legal and membership issues in order to connect with private organizations. He said it was essential for GEO to decide where it wants to be 10 years from now, who its partners will be, how long relationships will last, and what the impacts of these commitments would be. GEO also needs to decide how it wants to engage with new stakeholders, including linking through projects and defining membership levels. GEO should also articulate what the aim is, whether to develop social benefits, gain additional visibility, procure funding, or leverage initiatives. These choices will influence the center of gravity of GEO, and he hopes to be able to foster a balanced partnership between GEO and the private sector. Daria Lopez-Alegria, president of Space Bridges Sàrl, then explained the methodology they proposed, in which the first task was to gather intelligence from the Committee in order to identify the right mix of people (“insolent mix”) to form a “Think Tank”, capable of asking the right questions. The Think Tank, to be introduced at an October workshop, would then produce a format for establishment of the Public Sector Forum (PSF).

Discussion:

In response to Japan's request for clarity regarding the term “multi-stakeholder” (whether, for example, it would encompass funding agencies), as well as the expected outcome of the Think Tank and PSF, Mr Pitton Julien responded that the term “multi-stakeholder” was used in this context to encompass any stakeholder that is not currently involved in GEO. He explained that the Think Tank

was part of the process to help GEO define what it wants from the PSF, which will ultimately produce guidelines for interaction with the private sector. The UK underscored that fostering economic growth should form an integral part of any engagement of GEO with the private sector. Nigeria wanted to know how the private sector will link to the vision of GEO, and whether members from the developing world will be invited to join the Think Tank. The Director responded that the kind of GEO the community wants will determine the way GEO engages with the private sector, and that we are now in the process of finding persuasive arguments for that engagement. Both the EC and China voiced the need define what GEO means by the term “private sector” to avoid an overly broad approach in fulfilling Plenary’s mandate. China further suggested the Secretariat produce models of engagement to help the Committee understand the implications. The US agreed, noting that it was difficult for the Committee to respond spontaneously to these issues without first having something concrete to study and with which to react. The US further emphasized that it is in the application of Earth observations that GEO needed collaboration with the private sector. Thus, one suggestion would be to look at the GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan and identify user-related industries which already make use of Earth observations that GEO should initially engage, such as financial risk modelers, electric companies, agribusiness, and so forth. The Director cautioned against being too narrow in perspective at this juncture since knowledge might be lacking, resulting in premature elimination of any options which might have repercussions on the future of GEO. Certain large companies, such as Google and ESRI are interested in engaging with GEO, but the community has yet to hear from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with regard to potential for economic growth to their governments through engagement with GEO. The EC noted that the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) was already supporting a number of SMEs, and this could form a starting point. Both the UK and the US stressed the need for progress on this topic and thus suggested that the Secretariat be allowed to proceed with the proposed methodology as long as the process does not remain open-ended, but rather results in specific recommendations and advice. The EC added that interviews centering on engagement between GEO and the private sector should focus on both the implementation of GEOSS, and the downstream provision of Earth observations to markets and application development by the private sector. Mr Pitton clarified that the interview exercise, from the private sector point of view, would focus on issues such as whom, within GEO, SMEs would deal with in financing private-public partnerships; the legal structure of GEO; the use of data in for-profit enterprises; reinvestment from non-profit organizations back into developing countries, and obtaining matching funds from foundations.

The Chair concluded by noting the Committee’s support for the methodology and schedule proposed by the Secretariat, starting with the immediate survey of Committee members to inform the selection of individuals to form the Think Tank, which will be formally introduced at a workshop in October, followed by the establishment of the PSF in November. The outcome of the PSF should be a series of recommendations for GEO’s engagement of the private sector, to be presented at the GEO-X Plenary. The process should also take into account the documents being produced for the Geneva Ministerial by the MWG, PWG, and IPS.

Action 28.6: PWG to clarify definition of “private sector” in Recommendation 4.4 (Engagement with the Private and Not-for-Profit Sectors) [29th Executive Committee]

Meeting adjourned at 18:00

Day 2: Meeting commenced at 09:00

5 GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 Target and Task Progress (Document 9 – for consultation)

The Director prefaced this item by reminding the Committee that the document represented a merger of the IB assessment of progress towards the Strategic Targets, and Task progress. She noted that the IBs were also largely responsible for the assessment of Target progress, with input from the Secretariat.

World Health Organization expert and Societal Benefits IB Co-chair, Dr Rifat Hossain, presented the Target progress portion of the document. He explained that the assessment focused on the Architecture, Capacity Building, and Biodiversity (in particular) Strategic Targets. He noted that the IBs had decided the methodology used previously was basically sound, and that the IBs had striven to apply colour coding and specific symbols uniformly across their assessments. Nevertheless, these three targets were presented as a trial balloon by the IBs to the Committee, before they launched into an assessment of the full set of Targets. He further noted that many expressed difficulty in making an informed assessment of progress towards a given Target due to lack of granularity and visibility of individual issues. He also mentioned the need for GEO to consider how its Strategic Targets for the post-2015 period could be aligned with the human development goals of the Post-2015 Development Agenda (including post Millennium Development Goals [MDGs] and Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs]). As an example, the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) is becoming an important feature of targets for the SDGs. However, it has proven difficult to monitor progress towards these kinds of targets due to lack of Earth observation data, so both reaching the targets of both MDGs and SDGs could benefit from GEO and its promotion of data sharing and improved data access.

Secretariat Work Plan Coordinator Dr Alexia Massacand provided a summary overview of Task progress that has been achieved across GEOSS since the 27th Executive Committee meeting. She noted various highlights of the recent period, including: the opening up of ocean biogenic data to the entire community; an increasing number of GEO Members making contributions to the GEOSS DataCore; connections being made to the Belmont Forum with respect to calls on arctic monitoring, land cover change, and food security; how progress in Task SB-05 (Human Impacts) was advancing in conjunction with Ministerial showcases; how GEOSS contributes directly to HE-02-C1 (Global Mercury Observation System) and the convention on supply and trade of mercury; a major output of CL-02 (Global Carbon Observation and Analysis) was a global database on CO₂ now made available through GEOSS; how efforts to coordinate monitoring networks for the “3-pole regions” (WA-01-C3) were advancing; and how BI-01 (Global Biodiversity Observations - GEO BON) was accelerating the development of tools for biodiversity monitoring, such as that developed by EU BON allowing monitoring of changes in the distribution of species.

Discussion:

The Director commented that the document attempted to align the vast network of projects in the GEO community with Strategic Targets to monitor progress. Many of these projects have been volunteered from researchers in hopes of raising funds for their projects through increased visibility. She noted the trial assessment of the Biodiversity Target aimed to provide more actionable information by identifying resources needed in terms of funding, broader engagement, etc. The point of this assessment is to be able to demonstrate to Ministers that while much has been accomplished, more needs to be done. Japan pointed to the need to connect GEO with the Future Earth initiative in addition to the Belmont Forum. The EC found the report much improved, and that the need for more resources should be carefully communicated. In that respect, it called for the highlights to be assessed for the general public as an audience, not just the scientific community. South Africa commented that this

assessment was a better tool to determine progress. Nevertheless, the perennial finding from the Monitoring & Evaluation WG is that all the Strategic Targets will not be met by 2015, so it wondered how seriously the GEO community takes these assessments, and whether the current setup really permits an outside view of reality. In response to a query by China, the Director responded that a complete assessment of progress towards all Strategic Targets will be provided to Plenary, with perhaps a highlight synthesis for the Geneva Ministerial. Japan remarked it would appreciate greater mention of GOSAT contributions in the future. The EC commented that its contributions are on behalf of the European Union (Member States), and that support of GEO was much broader than just funding for research. The Director observed that, regarding engagement with the Future Earth initiative, the International Council on Science (ICSU) is a PO in GEO and preliminary exploration and discussion have indicated that GEO could position itself upstream by responding to their requirements for Earth observation requirements. Dr Hossain reiterated his strong recommendation that GEO look for ways to make connections with both MDGs and SDGs in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The Chair concluded by noting the Committee accepted the assessment methodology of the IBs in principle, but that more details should be provided in the next assessment with respect to implications of the ratings.

Action 28.7: Secretariat to add more policy-level implications in communicating highlights of Task progress. [*29th Executive Committee*].

5.2 Progress on GEOGLAM Implementation (Document 10 – for consultation)

Agriculture Community of Practice Co-chair and University of Maryland professor, Dr Chris Justice, presented the latest achievements of GEOGLAM, including the outline of the Implementation Plan as had been requested by the 27th Executive Committee. He also stressed the need for a dedicated support expert at the Secretariat. The Director commented that it was important to look for venues such as G-8 to present GEOGLAM and its successes. The EC appreciated the accomplishments of GEOGLAM as it demonstrates concretely the coordination GEO can bring to global issues, and points the way for future GEO initiatives. China observed that GEOGLAM had become a leading project of GEO in that it highlighted the importance of international agencies working together. China also indicated it plans to make a second secondment to the Secretariat. Dr Justice agreed that the level of coordination was important, and that dedicated Secretariat support was critical. The Director concluded by ensuring the draft implementation plan had satisfied the Executive Committee's request; the Committee agreed that, indeed, it had.

5.3 Renewal of Implementation Board Membership (Document 11 – for consultation)

Dr Massacand presented the document, noting that the proposed changes applied only to those candidates for the outside expertise positions on the IBs; otherwise the process for Task Coordinator participation remained the same. The Director added that the main point was managing a situation where a few people do most of the work on the IBs, with a second tier being somewhat responsive, and a third tier who are largely inactive. Moreover, since the purpose of the Boards is to perform evaluations, expertise of its members was more important than geographic representation.

The EC suggested that the Committee could make more meaningful decisions if the Secretariat provided a cover note including a list of who had applied, the criteria on which the candidates should be selected, and recommendations from the Secretariat based on these criteria. South Africa agreed, noting it was not the job of the Committee to go through every application, but rather the Secretariat could make recommendations to the Committee. The Rules of Procedure (RoP) may need to be amended to reflect this idea. The UK would like to see consideration of regional representation as well as identification of skill sets that each Board may need. The US agreed that the Boards are qualified to make the appropriate decisions, and the Committee should confirm the power of the Boards to do so. Also, where there are several nominations from the same country, perhaps a single applicant should be identified, with others serving as alternates. The EC remarked that if a given IB member is not active

(for example, absent for three successive meetings), the member's nominating country should be requested to withdraw the member. The EC also agree that Boards should be empowered to make decisions regarding prospective candidates. The Director responded that the Executive Committee had decided that regional representation was not as critical for the IBs as technical expertise, and that regional representation is expressed through participation in the Executive Committee and Plenaries. Moreover if technical expertise is the main guideline, several nominations from the same country should be considered. Dr Massacand concluded that the Secretariat will make recommendations regarding expert applications for IB membership.

Action 28.8: Secretariat to revise Document 11 (Renewal of Implementation Board Membership), to include clear criteria defining active Board membership [*29th Executive Committee*].

Action 28.9: Secretariat to provide recommendations on top eight Implementation Board candidates to Executive Committee with respect to Implementation Board applications. [*29th Executive Committee*].

6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

6.1 Presentation on 4th GEOSS Evaluation Report (Document 12 – for acceptance)

Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group (M&EWG) Co-chair Lars Eide presented the report which had evaluated the Disasters, Energy and Health SBAs. Among other highlights, he observed that although 11 people had agreed to help with the evaluation, only 8 participated. He also noted the difficulty in completing the evaluation with a high degree of certainty since several of the Task Component sheets had not been filled out, and contributions from many FP7 projects had not been fully captured. The report also found that cross-cutting efforts among the SBAs were not evident. In response to the survey question as to whether activities would have been accomplished independent of GEO, he noted the general conclusion was yes, but at a slower pace and with less engagement. The International Charter on Disasters had definitely benefited from GEO. From the transmittal letter, he also highlighted issues common to the 3 SBAs reviewed, which were:

- Difficult standards against which to evaluate progress;
- Exchanges with Task Leads result in overly optimistic assessments;
- Difficult for evaluation team to digest everything;
- Gaps between action necessary to achieve targets and actual Task activities not managed adequately;
- User engagement not evident.

The Director noted that steps are being taken in the Secretariat to address these issues. For example, the Secretariat has started bi-monthly staff meetings to exchange updates on activities across other domains. In addition, the format of the Work Plan Symposium was changed to include panel discussions in the hope of fostering cross- SBA linkages. She also noted that the Water, Weather and Climate SBAs are next in line for evaluation, and the call for nominations to the M&EWG to form the evaluation team had been issued by the Secretariat. The EC thanked Mr Eide and the team for their important work and expressed concern that participation in the evaluation team was low, and that there was no African participation. The EC noted that an important FP7 project exploring the use of Earth observations to monitor air quality and cholera outbreaks (EO2Heaven), had somehow been overlooked as a contribution to the Health SBA. The EC further called for a mechanism to notify Member governments when nominations fail to engage fully, and recommended a fuller discussion on the issue at the next Committee meeting. Estonia commented that the main problem is the voluntary nature of GEO, and found that it worked well at the political level, but less so at the WP level where activity tends to stem from projects already financed. Estonia noted that when gaps are identified, GEO has no direct mechanism to address them, aside from EC's 7th Framework Programme. No single

entity is to blame for this state of affairs; rather the community needs to be content with what is produced since producing anything further is difficult. The US echoed the remarks from Estonia, and observed that the evaluation is only useful if there is a plan for responding to issues identified, and resources required to meet them. The user-unfriendly nature of the GEO Portal is an example of this type of problem. The Director acknowledged the GEO Portal problem is considerable, and asked for support from the Executive Committee when the Secretariat plays a stronger role in directing the activities of the Teams working on the GCI. Mr Eide responded that the evaluation team obviously had not analyzed everything, and will make a re-evaluation prior to issuing the final report. The low survey response rate may be due to outdated databases, and also non-native speakers may feel inhibited having to respond in English.

The Chair concluded by noting that Plenary expected a response to the report, and that one member of the Executive Committee should work with the Secretariat in its development.

Action 28.10: Secretariat to request nomination from the Executive Committee for support in drafting Committee response to the 4th GEOSS Evaluation Report. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

6.2 Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations (Document 13 – for acceptance)

Secretariat expert, Dr Giovanni Rum, presented the document, noting that it was the Secretariat's attempt to track actions in response to recommendations stemming from the M&E WG evaluation reports. He explained that the document provided a "snapshot" of actions, rather than representing a pro-active strategy, and there was still time for reactions from the full GEO community. He summarized by saying the main issue that keeps returning is the fact that GEO has no mechanism mandating any type of action in response to identified problems and gaps – perhaps the IBs could be more involved in a systematic way.

The UK found the document useful, but requested expansion on the "unable to assess category". South Africa supported the UK's remarks, noting refinements of that particular category would make the document even more useful. The US agreed on the need for more details, noting it is difficult to respond to criticisms too general in nature. The EC remarked that the Executive Committee needed to be more outspoken about its expectations, and that it is indefensible if real progress regarding the Strategic Targets is recorded as being impossible to measure. The Director added that consideration should be given to better communication in connection with the yellow colour-coding. She also noted that the current SBA structure does not translate well outside the GEO community, and perhaps it would be better to express the work of GEO in terms of sectors (e.g. agriculture, transportation, energy), and Earth system components (e.g. water, weather, climate). The US responded it was hesitant to renegotiate the SBAs, but was open to reframing them in the context of the new Implementation Plan for the next phase of GEO.

Dr Rum summarized by stating the aim had been to draw out information to make links clearer, rather than challenge the logic model. For its next issue, the Secretariat will categorize the red and yellow colour-coding in an attempt to stimulate discussion in a search for meaningful solutions.

Action 28.11: M&E WG and Secretariat to revise Document 13 (Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations), to provide details on classification with respect to red ("unable to assess") and yellow colour-code categories. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

7 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

7.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 14 – for consultation)

Dr Cripe, introduced the document noting that the format of the report had been changed significantly for the sake of clarity and reducing redundancy. He noted the arrival of the new Senior Administrative

Manage, Ms Patricia Geddes, at the Secretariat as of 1 June, and Secretariat Expert Osamu Ochiai, re-seconded to the Secretariat by the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), also as of 1 June. The Director highlighted that Georgia had officially joined the family of GEO in April, bringing the total number of Members to 90 (including the EC). She also mentioned that Mr Bob Samors will be joining the Secretariat as Senior External Relations Officer as of 1 September.

The EC extended its congratulations to the Secretariat for helping secure the membership of Georgia. The EC also remarked that, given GEO is global in nature, there was a need to keep geographic balance regarding missions (only one had been to Africa). South Africa noted the formal launch of AfriGEOSS should help contribute to this balance. The UK commented that it appreciated the revised format of report, finding it very clear. Regarding the reports on the results of meetings, the UK would appreciate having the special-initiative Secretariat meetings listed separately (e.g. GFOI, etc.).

Action 28.12: Secretariat to initiate practice of separate reporting of meetings for special initiatives in Document 14 (Secretariat Operations Report). *[29th Executive Committee]*

7.2 Report of the External Auditors for 2012 (Document 15 – for information)

WMO Finance Department Chief, Mr Luckson Ngwira presented the report on behalf of the Swiss Federal Audit Office. He reported that the audit showed the Secretariat's financial statements were correct, and the financial statements were presented fairly, in all material aspects, the financial position of the Group on Earth Observations as of 31 December 2012, as well as its financial performance and cash flow for the year then ended, in accordance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and WMO's Financial Regulations.

7.3 Mid-term Report on Income and Expenditure (Document 16 – for consultation)

Ms Patricia Geddes presented the report, noting the recent fulfilment of pledges from Canada, Sweden and Switzerland in the interim since the report had been drafted. The Director expressed thanks to Canada, Sweden and Switzerland for their contributions and noted, with appreciation, Canada, whose contribution represented instalments to the Trust Fund covering the next five years. She also pointed out that budget projections for the remainder of the year had been prepared, a new feature of the report. The EC requested that expenditures for contracting services be accounted for separately.

Action 28.13: Secretariat (as a practice for future reports) to include separate category for expenditures for contractors employed under Special Service Agreements in Document 16 (Mid-term Report on Income and Expenditure). *[29th Executive Committee]*.

7.4 Management of the GEO Trust Fund (Document 17 – for consultation)

Ms Geddes presented the document. She recalled that the WMO administrative agreement with the GEO Secretariat required it to set aside CHF 2 million from the GEO Trust Fund annually as a reserve to cover Secretariat salaries. The proposed CHF 1 million Working Capital Fund (WCF) would provide the Secretariat with resources for operations in the beginning of the fiscal year when contributions to the Trust Fund had not yet been received. She explained the aim was to build the WCF to the targeted amount through setting aside surpluses in the period leading up to 2015. The Director added that, in the period since 2012, she had to negotiate with WMO to exceptionally lower the salary reserve to cover 9 months in order to fund Secretariat operations. With respect to GCI management, she noted the cost of recruiting an expert would be roughly 250-300K (UN P3 level). She explained that there are extra expenses connected to management of these special initiatives: 7% to WMO to pay for office space and other services, and 8% to the Secretariat for its support costs. The EC understood the intent of the 15% overhead, but remarked that a stronger argument for its justification was needed, especially in light of austere financial circumstances. The EC also noted the WCF was to be built from carry-over funds, and suggested the document be revised accordingly to explain these aspects more clearly. The US supported the proposal to establish a WCF, especially in a non-uniform pledge environment, and agreed with the EC that it would be helpful to have additional

information on how the 15% figure was derived. The US further noted that the Rules of Procedure implied the establishment of an element such as the WCF was a decision to be made by Plenary, not by the Executive Committee.

Action 28.14: Secretariat to revise Document 17 (Management of the GEO Trust Fund), to indicate that establishment of Working Capital Fund, building on surpluses from each previous fiscal year, is subject to approval at GEO-X Plenary (retroactive to 1 January 2014). *[29th Executive Committee]*.

Action 28.15: Secretariat to revise Document 17 (Management of the GEO Trust Fund), to provide strengthened rationale of 15% overhead. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

Action 28.16: Secretariat to identify staffing possibilities for managing the GEOSS DataCORE in conjunction with GCI. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

7.5 Staffing Update (Document 18 – for information)

The Director presented the document, noting the intent was to clarify how fixed-term staff members were represented. Including the recent secondments, she observed that the Secretariat is comprised of an approximately even split between secondments and fixed-term staff. In response to a query from the EC regarding the difference between “Professional” (P) and “General” (G) staff categories, the Director responded that while all personnel are considered professional in their roles and responsibilities, the UN uses the “P” category for personnel with responsibilities that are more scientific or programmatic in nature. Ms Geddes clarified that although contractors are not considered as full-time staff, their costs are bundled together with the salaries and employee benefits of all staff categories.

The EC remarked it would prefer to see a separate accounting for contractors and consultants to identify resources required for their engagement. Nigeria was satisfied with the staffing charts, and suggested careful consideration should be given to striking the correct balance between the “P” and “G” categories.

7.6 Communications Strategy (Document 19 – for consultation)

External contractor, Ms Katherine Canipelli, ~~Space Bridges Srl~~, made the presentation. Among other key points, she noted that GEO is not a typical brand – rather it is an idea that organizes a process, supported by resources whose efforts facilitate results that GEO can never claim to own. She also emphasized the need to find value propositions that tie GEO to its product in a new way.

The US wondered if she had insights into clarifying the GEO/GEOSS labeling problem, noting confusion with other entities such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Global Environment Outlook (GEO). Ms Canipelli responded that situational coupling and decoupling of the GEO/GEOSS brand was important to preserve and distinguish its identity. Canada inquired whether Ms Canipelli had any recommendations as to how GEO should be branded with political masters, to which she responded that, in general, all ministers and policy leaders seek to create value and prominence. GEO must therefore seek a stronger identity within the global context and project messages that are oriented towards their interests that emphasize the primacy of Earth observation data, as well as that of the process and benefits of multi-lateral collaboration on economic development. The US commented that the community must avoid mistakes made in the past, such as labelling agencies as part of GEO that did not wish to be. Nigeria observed that perhaps GEO could promote its brand through inclusion of a GEO stamp on its products. Dr Cripe commented that the former GEO Science and Technology Committee had given considerable thought to this concept, going so far as to coin “Enabled by GEO” or “Made with GEO” as a possible means to convey the GEO label, but that there had been little support for this idea from the wider community at the time.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

8.1 Update on New Zealand representation

The Director reported that New Zealand will step down from the Executive Committee.

Action 28.17: Secretariat to contact the Asia-Oceania Caucus for nomination to replace the New Zealand seat on the Executive Committee. *[29th Executive Committee]*

8.2 Schedule for Remaining Executive Committee Meetings in 2013

The Director suggested a physical meeting of the Executive Committee the week of 28 October to focus on preparations and review of final document drafts for the GEO-X Plenary and Geneva Ministerial. South Africa reiterated its concern that elements of the Ministerial portfolio tie all the pieces together into a coherent whole to effectively communicate the message to Ministers that GEO matters. The US noted that, given the 30 August deadline for new drafts of the Ministerial documents, there was still time for substantial changes to be made prior to the October Committee meeting. The EC suggested a virtual meeting of the Committee Co-Chairs in mid-September to discuss the documents produced by 30 August deadline. The Secretariat proposed a Committee Co-Chairs teleconference be scheduled for 17 September (now scheduled for 18 September), with comments on the Ministerial documents submitted to the Secretariat beforehand.

8.3 Proposed Modifications to Rules of Procedure (Document 20 – for consultation)

The Director remarked that there was insufficient time to adequately consider this item. To facilitate the discussion, Secretariat will circulate all PO applications in advance of the next meeting of the Committee in October. The EC commented that indeed more deliberation was needed on the topic of POs, to ensure GEO's interests are met by adding these organizations. The EC therefore invited the Secretariat to reflect upon the establishment of appropriate acceptance criteria for agencies seeking PO status, and what GEO could expect from them. China noted a name correction with respect to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for the Asia-Pacific (UNESCAP).

Action 28.18: Secretariat to provide completed submitted application forms, for consideration by Committee. *[29th Executive Committee]*.

9 SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

(The Co-Chairs from South Africa and the EC had left the meeting by this point due to schedule constraints.)

Dr Cripe reviewed the main outcomes and action items from the Committee meeting for clarity and consensus. The US suggested that a future practice should include a summary, at the conclusion of each section, while the material is still fresh in everyone's mind.

In closing, the Chair thanked everyone for their hard work, good discussion, and their support as he chaired the meeting.

The US Co-Chair thanked China for its effective chairing by keeping the meeting on task. She appreciated the conversation over the past two days, and was impressed with the level of knowledge and thoughtfulness of the discussion. It was obvious to her that people are dedicated to GEO, and now the task was to convey this inspiration and devoted participation to the Ministers. She thanked the Secretariat for its hard work and preparations leading the meeting, calling for a round of applause.

The Director appreciated the remarks regarding the Secretariat. She also expressed appreciation to China for its leadership, was encouraged by the level of commitment from the entire Executive Committee, and the dedicated support of the Secretariat in preparing for this meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 17:45

28th GEO Executive Committee

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