

Executive Summary
29th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 30-31 October 2013
(As accepted at the 30th 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.

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting was chaired Ms Anne J. Castle, the GEO Co-Chair representing the United States of America.

- The Chair agreed to South Africa's proposal to consider Document 10 as Agenda item 2.2.4 given its importance in providing guidance to Ministers;
- Stronger Emphasis on Plenary preparations to be given to Agenda item 2.1;
- Draft Report of 28th Executive was accepted, with proposed changes to page 9 (item 3.2) correction of title of Ms Yana Gevorgyan and page 15 (item 6.1, Action 28.10) removal of the words "Estonia and UK volunteered";
- The Chair noted that closing Actions Items from the previous Executive Committee meeting would be done pending satisfactory discussion of documents related to the Action Items.

2 PROGRESS ON PLENARY AND MINISTERIAL PREPARATIONS (DOCUMENT 4 – FOR CONSULTATION)

The Executive Committee agreed on the following recommendations to the Ministerial Working Group:

- Change the planning for Plenary and Ministerial events and requested the Secretariat to put forward a schedule that had the GEO-XI Plenary in late 2014 or early 2015 and the GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial in late 2015 or early 2016;
- Revision should be made to Ministerial Agenda to foresee the official adoption of the Ministerial Declaration towards the end of the day, after the presentation of all official Statements;
- Limit the number of keynote speeches to three in order to accommodate a session lead by a Co-Chair on the request to Ministers for their guidance for the evolution of GEO;
- Keynote speeches to include current and future benefits, sustainable development, collaboration with Private Sector and International Organisations;

- Strengthen the opening paragraph of the Ministerial Declaration with a strong statement that includes economic development and growth. Change the word “acknowledge” to “encourage” in point 7. End paragraph 12 after thanking the Swiss hosts;
- Recommend changes to the Vision for GEO 2025 document as per Action 29.5 below:

Action 29.1: Secretariat and Ministerial Working Group (MWG) to redraft Plenary and Ministerial schedule to accommodate GEO-XI Plenary in late 2014 or early 2015; and GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial for late 2015 or early 2016 for the endorsement of the new Implementation Plan.

Action 29.2: Secretariat and MWG to reconsider agenda timing with respect to adoption of Ministerial Declaration to allow all interventions before the actual adoption and inclusion of new session on Ministerial guidance for the evolution of GEO.

Action 29.3: Secretariat and MWG to refine keynote themes along the following lines: (one keynote may be eliminated to make room for special session): GEOSEC To refer back to EXCOM within two weeks for final sign off.

- Current and future achievements/benefits of GEO (including specific examples);
- Sustainable development;
- Private sector (innovation) and international organization collaboration.

Action 29.4: Secretariat and MWG to refine Declaration:

- Chapeau paragraph: draft strong statement including economic development and growth;
- Paragraph 7 revised to encourage and broaden GEO community base;
- Paragraph 12: limit to thanking host country.

Action 29.5: Secretariat and Post-2015 Working Group (PWG) to refine Vision for GEO 2025:

- Part A: The Case for a renewed GEO:
 - Change title of Context paragraph 1 to better reflect content (description of societal challenges, creation and continuation of GEO);
 - Change order of bullet points under section 3.
- Part B: Recommendations for GEO through 2025:
 - Clarify opening paragraph to reflect intended procedure with respect to Plenary and Ministerial;
 - Find alternative wording to “continue” (renewal, regrowth, impacts);
 - Change Recommendation 3 title to reflect content (priorities, focus, orientation, emphasis on need to address societal challenges).

The Executive Committee considered a redrafted part A of the Preliminary Guidance for GEO 2025, Pathway to GEOSS 2025. It was agreed that:

- a facilitated discussion will occur in the agenda of the Ministerial Summit consisting of an initial presentation of the request for guidance and short optional responses provided by Ministers;
- there will be a recording of the responses but with no attribution or any reference in the Ministerial official documents, the outcomes of the session will be provided to an Implementation Plan drafting team for guidance;
- the one page summary document will be included in the Ministerial folder for consultation but instead of providing specific scenarios will provide a range/spectra of options;

- the document will footnote the following sentence: “For more information and details please refer to the Vision for GEO 2025 and the Pathway to GEOSS 2025 documents”. These documents will NOT be part of the Ministerial folder but included in the Plenary package;
- the shorter document will also have a reference to establishing an Implementation Plan drafting team.

The Executive Committee concurred that a GEO Fact Sheet and Progress Report be provided to Ministers and requested changes to the proposed outline for the Progress Report

29.6 Action: Secretariat to develop the Report to include more emphasis on numbers, end-users and actual achievements, taking into account the Beijing Report on Progress as shown in the Appendix. Items 3.3 and Section 4 to be omitted.

The Executive Committee considered measures to increase participation at the Ministerial and GEO Week.

29.7 Action: Secretariat to request indication from Executive Committee by end of November on likelihood of their Minister’s participation. To be circulated to GEO-Principals.

- Secretariat will work with GEO volunteer leadership (Task Team leaders; Board Co-Chairs, etc.) to encourage participation by Participating Organization leadership;
- Secretariat will prepare a draft letter to GEO Principals from Executive Committee Co-chairs..

3 GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION

The Executive Committee provided further guidance for the preparation of the full Task and Strategic Target progress report to Plenary. They suggested that the Data Sharing Working Group (DSWG) investigate reporting mechanisms for user metrics. The recommendations for the renewal of the Implementation Boards were accepted. The Executive Committee was pleased to see the progress made by the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) Team and thanked them profusely for bringing the GEOSS Portal to a higher level of usability within the Sprint To Summit process.

29.8 Action: Secretariat to refine Strategic Target Progress report:

- Include in future reports a paragraph on the rationale for grading;
- Clearer mapping from recommended actions to solving problems indicated.

29.9 Action: Secretariat/GCI Team and DSWG requested to provide report on mechanism for tracking user metrics in GEO.

4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Executive Committee agreed to the proposed response to the 4th Evaluation Team with the following changes and agreed that the Secretariat provide support to the 5th Evaluation:

- Recommendation 7: performance indicators or metrics should be established at some point in the future, and identify a few that can be tracked and followed directly from the evolution of GEOSS;
- Recommendation 8: targets are made more focused and measurable.

29.10 Action: Secretariat to modify Document 14, Executive Committee response to the 4th GEOSS Evaluation Report with respect to Recommendations 7 and 8.

29.11 Action: Secretariat to draft letter to GEO Principals on behalf of Evaluation Team requesting:

- list of relevant evaluations, reports with web links or contacts where documents may be obtained;
- list of potential contacts for surveys or interviews, particularly from information user perspective.

5 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

The Secretariat Operations Report and Interim Report on Income and Expenditure were noted. The recommendations to Plenary on the acceptance of applications to become either Participating Organizations or Observers were accepted. More information will be sought by the Secretariat on four of the applications for consideration by EXCOM.

29.12 Action: Secretariat to clarify that Working Capital Fund is in addition to CHF 2 million salary reserve required by WMO.

29.13 Action: Secretariat to explain the rationale for the proposed 10% overhead rate, and explore whether rate can be taken at expenditure and not at time of contribution. Ref: Plenary GEO–IX.

29.14 Action: Secretariat to clarify conditional recommendations on four of the applications to become Participating Organizations.

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Update on Communication Strategy, Private Sector Initiative and Think Tank Process.

The Secretariat will continue to work on the Communications Strategy to refine near-term, mid-term and long-term actions.

The recommendations derived from the Private Sector Initiative and Think Tank Process are:

- GEO needs to sharpen its statements of offerings or its value proposition;
- Rather than a large forum, strong desire for future interactions should be focused by sector – small groupings of people in same sector, not CEOs but decision-makers in marketing, research and technology;
- Needs to be within GEO a single point of contact for private industry to approach, also looking out for opportunities to engage with private sector;
- Big neon sign is GEO has data, also important to keep in mind that we have a lot of work to close gaps in data, room for non-Earth observation people to engage in this endeavour.

29.15 Action: Secretariat to produce draft communications plan/roadmap by March 2014 Executive Committee meeting.

The proposed modifications to Rules of Procedure were accepted for recommendation to Plenary.

29.16 Action: Secretariat to clarify / distinguish the definitions of POs and Observers by March 2014.

Summary Report
29th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 30-31 October 2013
(As accepted at the 30th Executive Committee Meeting)

Day 1: Meeting commenced at 10:00

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The meeting was chaired Ms Anne J. Castle, the GEO Co-Chair representing the United States of America. Ms Castle welcomed all Executive Committee members and expressed her appreciation for their commitment to GEO and in particular to the Ministerial preparation process. Ms Castle felt that this was an opportune time to remind us all that the GEO platform with the ideal of full and open data sharing is, indeed, a revolutionary concept. The Executive Committee is requested to address how to build on the platform and take the concept further, to capitalise on the investments made for new and more robust societal benefit. She thanked the Post-2015 (PWG) and Ministerial Working Groups (MWG) for their hard work on bringing forward and refining the documents for Plenary and the Ministerial Summit, and expressed appreciation for the work of the Implementation Boards with a particular emphasis on the GCI Task Team.

The GEO Co-Chair representing the Peoples Republic of China, Prof. Wu Guoxiang Wu stated that this was his first representation as Co-Chair of the Executive Committee. He expressed his gratitude for the organisation of the meeting. China is hoping to contribute to building on the past accomplishments of GEO, and it is hoped that GEO will assist China in improving its understanding and managing of environmental and natural resources. He thanked all the Groups for their hard work in producing the documents and looked forward to working with the Executive Committee Members on providing guidance for the upcoming Plenary and Summit.

The GEO Co-Chair representing South Africa, Dr Phil Mjwara expressed his appreciation for all those who had worked hard on preparing the documents for this session. He expected the bulk of the discussion to be around the preparations of the Plenary and Ministerial. He envisaged that the meeting will highlight the significant progress in constructing GEOSS and looked forward to the GCI demonstration. He hoped that the Executive Committee provides guidance and refines the thoughts on the Plenary and Summit procedures.

The GEO Co-Chair representing the European Commission, Dr Rudolf Stohmeier, stated that this was a very important meeting in the preparations of the Plenary and Ministerial and stressed the necessity to devote sufficient time and effort to this endeavour.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1 – for acceptance)

South Africa proposed that Agenda Item 2.4 Preliminary Guidance for GEO 2025 and the associated Document 10 that has two parts: Part A - Pathway for GEOSS 2025 and Part B - Information Papers be discussed under the Agenda Item 2.2 Ministerial Folder and in conjunction with Agenda Item 2.2.3 Vision for GEO 2025. South Africa felt that Document 10, and in particular Part A – Pathway for GEOSS 2025, provided important information for inclusion in the Ministerial discussions.

Japan said that as there was an agreement at the previous Ex-Com to treat this document as information only, they preferred that the Document and agenda remain as originally scheduled.

The Chair suggested that there was no change in the proposed status of the Document at this juncture but agreed that it would be useful to bring forward the discussion of the Document as Agenda Item 2.2.4.

The European Commission echoed the need to discuss earlier Document 10. They proposed that Ministers should be provided with a Document that constitutes a useful tool to understand the way forward. They also proposed that there should be stronger emphasis on the Plenary preparations under Agenda Item 2.1.

The agenda was accepted noting that Agenda Item 2.4 and Document 10 would be discussed after Agenda Item 2.2.3 and thus become the new Agenda Item 2.2.4. It was also agreed that emphasis on the Plenary preparations will be made at Agenda Item 2.1.

1.2 Draft Summary Report of the 28th Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2 – for acceptance)

The Executive Committee agreed that the presentation of the Report, which included two parts, an Executive Summary together with a more detailed report of the proceedings of the discussions, was useful and expressed their preference for this presentation to be kept for future reports.

UK requested that the change in the draft report that expressed that UK and Estonia had volunteered on behalf of the Executive Committee to draft the Executive Committee response to the 4th Monitoring and Evaluation Report be removed and the original text be reinstated as this reflected more appropriately the discussions. The US requested a correction to page 9, which referenced the title of Ms Yana Gevorgyan.

The document was accepted with the proposed changes.

1.3 Actions from Previous Executive Committee Meetings (Document 3 – for acceptance)

The Director of the Secretariat proposed that most of the Action Items from the previous Executive Committee meetings were responded to by the documents under discussion at this meeting. The only exception was Action Item 28.17, which requested the Secretariat to contact the Asia-Oceania Caucus for a nomination to replace the New Zealand seat on the Executive Committee. This was completed on 7 August 2013.

Upon discussion of each of the relevant documents, the Executive Committee agreed that the Action Items from the previous meeting had, indeed, been closed.

The document was accepted.

2 PROGRESS ON PLENARY AND MINISTERIAL PREPARATIONS (DOCUMENT 4 – FOR CONSULTATION)

2.1 Flow of GEO Meetings throughout the week

Mr Giovanni Rum of the Secretariat and MWG introduced Document 4, which is a framework document for the Plenary and Ministerial Preparations. The document contained an overview of the GEO Week from Sunday 12 January to Friday 17 January. The Summit is scheduled for Friday 17 January and the week will also include Side Events, meetings and workshops, and the Exhibition, in addition to:

- GEO Implementation Board meetings, 13 January;
- GEO Executive Committee meeting, 14 January;

- GEO-X Plenary, 15-16 January.

A draft Plenary Agenda was presented. It is planned for the Plenary to conclude its proceedings at 15:00 on the second day to allow for a high-level Side Event from 16:30 to 18:30.

The decision process for the transition and continuity of action to GEO 2025 was presented. This included the endorsement of the continuation of GEO post-2015 and the mandating of the development of a new Implementation Plan at the Ministerial Summit of January 2014. The endorsement of the new Implementation Plan would occur at the GEO Plenary in November 2015, while the Ministerial planned for November 2016 would envisage a review of the final evaluation of the 2005-2015 period and an acceptance of the proposed plan for the next decade.

Discussion:

South Africa voiced a concern that this schedule foresees a period in which GEO would be operating without a mandate after the close of 2015 until the Ministerial of 2016. The European Commission proposed that there should be a Plenary and Ministerial in 2015. Australia felt that the mandate to continue after 2015 would be settled at the Ministerial in January 2014. The Rules of Procedure state that there should be a Plenary every calendar year and Australia, therefore, suggested that there could be a Plenary in November 2014.

Japan suggested that the Implementation Plan was an important document that required Ministerial approval and therefore there was a need for a Summit in late 2015 or early 2016. The UK agreed that a Ministerial towards the end of 2016 would be of little interest to the Ministers and that there should be an engagement at that level for the approval of the new Implementation Plan. This view was supported by Canada and South Korea.

The Secretariat agreed to take up the matter with the Ministerial Working Group, being mindful of the investment required of sponsor countries that would be willing to support and host such event.

Mr Len Hirsch of the Ministerial Working Group reminded the Committee to be mindful of the overload on the busy schedule of Ministers and that meeting too frequently may lead to fewer Ministers attending.

South Africa suggested that there was a need to consider two principles: firstly a number of Executive Committee Members felt that the new Implementation Plan required Ministerial approval and that it was open to interpretation whether the continuation of GEO post-2015 was indeed to be endorsed at the Ministerial of 2014; secondly that it made sense to hold a Ministerial and Plenary at the same time. There was a need to consider these two principles when inviting countries to host such an event. It also makes sense to request Ministers to give a mandate to continue GEO and then approve the new Implementation Plan as soon as possible thereafter.

The Chair summarised that there was a need to change the proposed schedule and requested the Secretariat to put forward a schedule that had the GEO-XI Plenary in early 2015 and the GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial in early 2016. Ministers would be requested to endorse the new Implementation Plan at this latter event. The Secretariat requested flexibility on the proposed dates so that, if feasible, these events could take place earlier than suggested by aiming to schedule them in the later parts of 2014 and 2015 respectively. This was agreed.

Action 29.1: Secretariat and Ministerial Working Group to redraft Plenary and Ministerial schedule to accommodate GEO-XI Plenary in late 2014 or early 2015; and GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial for late 2015 or early 2016 for the endorsement of the new Implementation Plan.

2.2 Ministerial Folder

2.2.1 Draft Ministerial Agenda (Document 5 - consultation)

Mr Giovanni Rum presented Document 5, which contained a proposal for the draft agenda for the Ministerial Summit to be held on Friday 17 January. The proposed programme includes an opening keynote speech from the Swiss host and three more keynote speeches for which the following themes were proposed:

- a) Need to ensure continuity and sustainability of GEOSS operations;
- b) How GEOSS will serve international initiatives, UN Conventions and other policy mandates; Potential role of the private sector and mutual benefits;
- c) How GEO is supporting sustainable development by ensuring (through GEOSS) access to environmental data and information and building capacity for use in decision making.

The original proposal scheduled the Declaration to be approved after the first block of the high-level Statements before the lunch break. A second block of Statements was planned for the afternoon session.

Discussion:

The UK urged that the keynote sessions should focus on current benefits of GEO and what can be expected in the future. The Director of the Secretariat noted that there will also be a high-level event on the Thursday evening which would feature the head of a UN agency, global private sector firm, and a Minister – discussion would focus on Earth observations and what this means to each of the Panellists. South Africa suggested the need to balance developed and developing countries. The European Commission felt that there is a limitation on the time available for the number of keynote speeches and the areas of importance for Ministers are: Achievements, Sustainable Development and Benefits for private sector (innovation). The US suggested that the proposed themes had some overlapping ideas, i.e. both items a) and b) address sustainability while one keynote could address both the private sector and international organisations. The UK supported the proposal to merge themes and limit the number of keynotes to two in total. Russia agreed in principle with the suggested themes but stressed the need to: highlight where and who uses GEO information; be specific and not use generalities and show practical results. The US concurred and suggested that specific examples should be shown.

The European Commission voiced a concern on the timing of the approval of the Declaration that is currently planned for the end of the morning session. This would diminish the relevance or necessity of the Statements being made in the afternoon after the approval of the Declaration. Normally, the formal acceptance should be made after all the Statements have been made. China agreed that the approval of the Declaration should take place at the end of the day. Japan concurred with the European Commission on the timing of the approval of the Declaration and requested more information on the order in which Statements would be made. The Secretariat responded that the order of the Statements is driven by diplomatic protocol and will be orchestrated by the Swiss hosts.

South Korea urged to make better use of the diplomatic Geneva-based Missions to the UN Agencies and would like to see closer involvement with both the Private Sector and International Organisations. The Secretariat assured that measures were being taken in this regard as Switzerland had already organised one briefing to the Geneva-based Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations on 10 October. A further briefing is tentatively scheduled for 26 November.

Action 29.2: Secretariat and MWG to revise agenda timing with respect to adoption of Ministerial Declaration and inclusion of a new session on Ministerial guidance for the evolution of GEO. (See item 2.2.4 and 2.2.4 continued)

Action 29.3: Secretariat and MWG to refine keynote themes along the following lines: (one keynote may be eliminated to make room for the special session):

- Current and future achievements/benefits of GEO (including specific examples);
- Sustainable development;
- Private sector and international organizations collaboration.

2.2.2 *Draft Ministerial Declaration (Document 6 – for information)*

Mr Len Hirsch of the Ministerial Working Group presented this document. The document was circulated to GEO Principals on 30 September.

Discussion:

The UK thanked the MWG for the hard work in getting the Declaration to this point. They felt that Ministers would be more interested in societal and economic challenges and this should be stressed more along with data sharing accessibility. They also indicated that a further paragraph between points 2 and 3 should be added that would set the stage and provide a “why” element to what we want to achieve. The EC questioned the changes and ordering of the verb tenses used at the beginning of each paragraph. Russian suggested that the Declaration should request governments do something, such as requesting resources for *in situ* and space-based observation networks. China suggested that the Declaration should not indicate appreciation of ourselves in point 12 and that only the host Country should be mentioned. The EC agreed that this paragraph should end after thanking the Swiss hosts. Mr Hirsch explained that the rationale was to acknowledge the voluntary efforts of a large number of Communities of Practice working “under the radar screen”. Australia felt that it is important to encourage cooperation with all segments of the GEO community as a means of broadening the base of GEO. This could be accomplished by changing the word “acknowledge” in point 7 to “encourage”.

The Chair concluded that the comments from the Executive Committee would be to strengthen the opening paragraph with a strong statement that includes economic development and growth. To change the word “acknowledge” to “encourage” in point 7. And to end paragraph 12 after thanking the Swiss hosts.

Action 29.4: Secretariat and MWG to refine Declaration:

- Chapeau paragraph: draft strong statement including economic development and growth;
- Paragraph 7 revise to encourage and broaden GEO community base;
- Paragraph 12: full stop after thanking host country.

2.2.3 *Vision for GEO 2025 (Document 7 - for information)*

Mr Gilles Ollier from the Post-2015 Working Group presented this Document. Part A of the document had been reworked substantially during the 28th Executive Committee meeting to remove GEO-specific language and reinforce the high-level political messages. Part B had been further refined at the meeting of the Post-2015 Working Group in Washington in September. The reference to the private sector in the governance section had been removed. He stressed that it is a consensual document intended to provide technical guidance for the future. The document was circulated to GEO Principals on 30 September; suggestions for changes from the Executive Committee will be taken up with any comments received from the GEO Principals for one last reiteration.

Discussion:

Canada expressed their thanks to the Post-2015 working group and appreciated the improvements to Part A of the document. Canada would like to see a re-ordering of the recommendations listed in Part B by bringing forward Recommendation 3 on Societal Challenges to become the first

Recommendation. This would provide an important message for Ministers. The UK echoed their gratitude to the Post-2015 Working Group and supported moving the Societal Challenges higher up in the document and would also like to include economic growth within the societal challenges. They felt that the context paragraph on page 2 was a little narrow and would like to see more on the fact that GEO is also about Open Data Sharing. The US questioned whether there would be a benefit to describing the societal challenges in Part A of the document. Mr Ollier explained that the ordering of the recommendations reflected the scope of the future GEO. South Africa proposed a slightly different point of view of what was required; the description being what was requested in 2005, what was achieved and therefore suggesting continuation. They suggested using Document 9 -- Preliminary Guidance for GEO-2025 as context for this document. China and Estonia would like to see a reordering of the bullet points on page 3, and suggested that the bullets describing Data Access and Integration and Data Sharing (currently points 4 and 5) become points 1 and 2. Australia cautioned about using words like “continue” in Recommendation 1 of Part B, which may not provide sufficient interest for Ministers. The US echoed this concern and suggested that words such as renewal and growth could be used instead. The EC agreed with the view of South Africa, and would also eliminate using words such as continue. They suggested Recommendation 1 should emphasise and increase the impact of GEO. And rather than changing the order of the recommendations, they would prefer to change the title of Recommendation 3 in order to increase its impact. The US agreed that the title of Recommendation 3 does not reflect the text of the recommendation. They also agreed that the context in Part A should set out the challenges. Australia pointed out that the opening paragraph of Part B is logically inconsistent with what is being requested of Plenary and Ministers.

The Chair reminded the Committee that GEO principals had been requested to provide their comments on the Document by 15 November and the Executive Committee comments will be considered within this process. There was agreement that the Committee proposed the following changes for the review process:

Part A: change title of Paragraph one to reflect more adequately its contents, which is a description of Societal Challenges, the creation and continuation of GEO. Change the order of bullets on page two to bring to the top of the list the Data Access and Integration and Data Sharing points.

Part B: change the initial paragraph to reflect the intended process and procedure with Plenary. Change the text in Recommendation 1 to indicate renewal, re-growth and impacts. Change the title of Recommendation 3 to better reflect content – priorities, focus and emphasis on the need to address societal challenges.

29.5 Action: Secretariat and PWG to refine Vision for GEO 2025:

- Part A: The Case for a Renewed GEO:
 - Change title of Context paragraph 1 to better reflect content (description of societal challenges, creation and continuation of GEO);
 - Change order of bullet points under section 3.

- Part B: Recommendations for GEO through 2025:
 - Clarify opening paragraph to reflect intended procedure with respect to Plenary and Ministerial;
 - Find alternatives to “continue” (renewal, regrowth, impacts);
 - Change Recommendation 3 title to reflect content (priorities, focus, orientation, emphasis on need to address societal challenges).

2.2.4 Preliminary Guidance for GEO 2025 (Document 10 – for consultation)

Ms Yana Gevorgyan introduced Document 10, which contained Part A - Pathway to GEOSS 2025 and Part B – Information papers. Ms Gevorgyan explained that Part A of the Document was put together

by a small task team at the request of the Executive Committee at its March meeting. The document was not intended to request commitments but rather serve as a platform for seeking guidance of Ministers for determining the scale of the future Implementation Plan for GEOSS. The document also attempted to respond to the request of South Africa to provide a logical flow between Ministerial Documents. The scenarios presented reflect that the implementation of GEOSS requires resources – both cash and in-kind. Scenario A proposes that, by expanding the resources to the Trust Fund, it is envisaged that there would be a higher level of expectation of more functions available in the Secretariat such as help-desk support, monitoring and evaluation and support to global initiatives. Scenario B, would see less growth in the increase of the level of resources resulting in fewer expectations and a lower number of global initiatives. While Scenario C, foresees a flat level of investment and the current approach maintained. The Director of the Secretariat added that the genesis of this document leading to the Executive Committee mandating its creation came from a decision of GEO-IX Plenary following a presentation of the Post-2015 Working Group proposing options. On the scale that spanned from discontinuing GEO on one end, to expanding GEO to the level of a UN organisation with mandatory contributions on the other, Plenary decided that GEO post 2015 would be something in-between these two options which was qualified as GEO-Plus.

Discussion:

The EC stressed that the original intent of this document would be to request guidance from Ministers and therefore it requires that it is put for their consultation and not just for information. The EC recommended that this document is put in the Ministerial folder together with the Vision Document so that questions are raised such as: What is the volunteer grouping that is GEO? Where do the majority want to go? What is the definition of “Plus” in GEO-Plus? That is the precise element that needs guidance. South Africa expressed their gratitude to the task team that had put together the document. The document has two functions. Firstly it responds to the Plenary decision to proceed with some scenario called GEO-Plus and it provides the basis on which to engage Ministers. South Africa would be uncomfortable asking a Minister to endorse a process that is undefined, or simply a continuation of the status quo. The Chair clarified that assurances had been made to Japan that the document would not be for adoption and is therefore currently for information. Canada expressed their appreciation for the work that had been done on the document. They echoed the EC’s view in that they regarded the Vision and Pathway documents as complementary and that they would like to see the document for guidance and not for adoption. Argentina noted that the document addresses points of great importance to the future of GEO that will need to be properly discussed among the GEO Members if it were to be adopted in the Ministerial. Australia agreed that the document provides an opportunity for Ministers to offer guidance on what GEO should be aiming for. Should we grow the impact of GEO through further engagement and contributions?

China would like to see an emphasis on contributions at a national level and joint initiatives with the private sector and Participating Organisations at a national level. They felt that the document should provide an idea of the short, medium and long-term deliverables and the resources needed to achieve them. Japan appreciates the work and the explanations provided on the origin and necessity of the document. However, they could not agree with the proposal from EC and South Africa and would like to keep the document for information only. It is clear that GEO needs to move forward over the next 10 years and encourage initiatives for sustainability. They see the Declaration as a key document for moving forward. To understand the Declaration, the Vision document is a good document, as it describes the achievements of the past 10 years and the direction in which we are moving and this document provides the basis for Ministers to make their decision. Document 10 contains no concrete plan, as the new Implementation Plan will be presented at the following Ministerial. The vagueness of this document may have an adverse effect and Ministers may decline to approve GEO when presented with such uncertainty. The Chair expressed her thanks to Japan on this clarification on where they see the risk in presenting this document to Ministers. She felt that we have somewhat of a chicken and egg situation, on one hand it is not useful at this point to deliver a full Implementation Plan with price tags,

and on the other hand there is a need for some indication on how to develop the details for the future. There appears to be a need to use this opportunity for Ministers to engage, not only on GEO future activities but also from an accountability perspective. The Pathways document brings some level of accountability. The UK suggested that rather than starting with the resources, describe the outcomes of taking GEO in different directions, what engagement will be required and its associated costs. Australia appreciates Japan's point that there is uncertainty in defining a way forward. A normal approach is to request Ministers to approve a definite way forward. In this case we are requesting Ministers to provide a direction and not an end-state.

South Africa, EC and Japan agreed that there is a concern with the way the current document is structured and propose to draft a shorter version of the document that provides a clear indication of what is being asked of Ministers.

The Chair proposed that a small task team prepare a shorter version of the document, ideally within one page to be further discussed by the Executive Committee the following day. (See page 14, for conclusion). She also suggested that the team include in the document the need for Plenary to establish a group that will work on the new Implementation Plan, as this has not been covered by other documents.

2.2.5 GEO Fact Sheet (Document 8 – for information)

2.2.6 Outline of Progress Report to Ministers (Document 9 - for information)

Mr Robert Samors of the Secretariat presented Documents 8 and 9. Document 9 had been requested at the last teleconference of the Ministerial Working Group that took place in September. The current document presented a proposed outline of items that may be included in such a Progress Report in view of the lack of time in the intervening period between the request and the provision of the Executive Committee documents.

Discussion:

The EC supported the need for a progress report to be presented to Ministers. They suggest that the inspiration for this report be taken from the reports provided to previous Ministerial meetings. The report could be restricted to achievements only and draw upon the wealth of materials already produced by the Secretariat. The US voiced a concern with the proposed outline and suggested that this could cause some duplication and inconsistencies. For example section 4.1 could be inconsistent with Document 7 – Vision for GEO 2025. They also supported the EC regarding section 3.3 and suggested to remove it. Australia found the proposal rather dry and would like to see a glossy booklet as produced in previous Summits. The EC agreed with this approach and proposed a brochure targeted for Ministers and their staff for communication purposes. The UK also agreed and suggested that Document 8 – GEO Fact Sheet could be expanded to accomplish this. Mr Samors explained that Document 8 was prepared for the Geneva Diplomatic Community and Mission briefing. The GEO Fact Sheet currently being prepared for the Ministerial would be 4 pages and provide high level highlights, this document is different from the Progress Report, which is a longer document with more detailed text.

The US questioned the necessity of the Fact Sheet and Progress report and questioned who would be the audiences of these documents. South Africa added that the showcase videos would provide a human touch and strengthen the highlights. Japan stressed the importance of including good visual information to show achievements, including data on the number of initiatives, etc. They also pointed out that Document 4 of the previous Ex-Com included a good list of initiatives. Mr Samors stated that the list of initiatives in the Appendix was not intended to be exhaustive but only a first draft. The Chair requested an indication of the timeline for the production of the report. Mr Samors explained that due to the time constraints the Report would not be ready for circulation with the rest of the Plenary documents planned for 27 November. It is expected that the printed copy would be ready for

distribution at the GEO Week in January, while a soft copy would be ready before the end of the year. The EC suggested using the Appendix of the Progress Report presented at Beijing, which provides a clear structure of a dozen points which could form the content of the progress report. Russia suggested taking into consideration what is important to users and the need to show the dynamics of users such as: How many? Who they may be? How do they make use of GEOSS? Mr Hirsch suggested that this document provides an acknowledgement to all who contribute to GEO and provides a useful document for contributors to take back to their home organisations. South Korea would like to see more items listed in achievements and the need to highlight the cooperation with organisations outside of GEO. The EC commented on an image used in Document 8 which is an example provided for the basis of the GEO Fact Sheet and cautioned using images that are not easy to understand for outsiders.

29.6 Action: Secretariat to develop a Report to include more emphasis on numbers, end-users, actual achievements, taking into account Beijing Report on Progress as shown in the Appendix. Items 3.3 and Section 4 to be omitted. The Report would be ready for distribution at Plenary.

2.3 Progress on Side Events, Showcases, Exhibitions and Planned Attendance (Document 4 – for information)

Mr Giovanni Rum presented this agenda item, which referred back to Document 4. The Executive Committee noted the current standing of the planning process of the Side Events, Showcases, and Exhibitions. The Swiss hosts were currently collecting planned attendance of Ministers.

Discussion:

The Director of the Secretariat suggested that Ministers would be more interested in coming to the event depending on the attendance of other Ministers and therefore suggested the importance of Ex-Com Members canvassing their Ministers for attendance. The Director of the Secretariat proposed that the Secretariat could provide support by working with technical experts through Task Teams, Communities of Practice, Working Groups, etc. to entice Ministerial engagement. Co-Chair and Ex-Com Members may wish to engage Participating Organisation Principals by sending letters to encourage their participation with the Secretariat providing support to this initiative. Co-Chairs might consider drafting letters to their peers as a follow-up to invitations already sent by the Secretariat. The EC suggested that having knowledge of the Ministers who have agreed to participate by the end of November could be used to leverage participation by other Ministers, perhaps through Side Event involvement. Australia cautioned that there may not be enough time if many Participating Organisations are expected to take the floor at the Ministerial. The US was concerned that sending letters to GEO Principals encouraging Ministerial participation without having a firm commitment from their own Ministers would be delicate. South Africa agreed that Ministerial commitment was difficult to obtain due to changing circumstances and priorities. China is committed to having a Minister present and would feel comfortable signing a letter to engage others. Australia felt that having an indication of the attendance situation at the end of November would provide support to their efforts.

29.7 Action: Secretariat to request indication from Executive Committee by end of November on likelihood of their Minister's participation. To be circulated to GEO-Principals.

- Secretariat will work with GEO volunteer leadership (Task Team leaders; Board Co-Chairs, etc.) to encourage participation by Participating Organization leadership;
- Secretariat will prepare a draft letter to GEO Principals from Executive Committee Co-Chairs.

Meeting adjourned at 18:00

Day 2: Meeting commenced at 09:00**Agenda Item 2.2.4 Preliminary Guidance for GEO 2025 Continued (Document 10 – for consultation)**

The Executive Committee considered the redrafted one-page overview of Part A of the Preliminary Guidance for GEO 2025, Pathway to GEOSS 2025. Ms Gevorgyan presented the new draft. She further proposed that the document should be decoupled from the Post-2015 Information Papers and presented to Plenary. The paper will also be presented to Ministers as part of the Ministerial Folder.

Japan stated that they appreciated the efforts that had been made. The new draft is fundamentally acceptable to them, including the three scenarios, as long as this remains an information paper. The US thought that the sense of group was that this would be presented for consultation since guidance is being requested.

South Africa proposed that the Ministerial Agenda would need to be re-thought. US, Estonia and the UK proposed that there was a need to capture the “what may-be” or what is possible from Ministers who wished to provide some guidance on the scale of the future GEO, and there was a need to describe scenarios in terms of activities. The EC agreed with the necessity of describing the scenarios in terms of activities and the level of activities each implied. There was a need to get an indication of the direction of the majority and this would form the basis on which way to move forward. They agreed that this shorter one-page version could be discussed at Plenary and later provided to Ministers to obtain guidance, while the longer version will be kept as background information. Australia stated that the scenarios should not be too descriptive and agreed with South Africa on the need to find a mechanism within the Ministerial Summit in order for the Ministers to respond. South Africa proposed to use the time allotted to one of the three of the currently planned keynote speeches to include an Executive Committee-lead session on the one-page document in order to request guidance from Ministers. Japan was concerned that for Ministers to discuss the document would no longer be inline with the original proposal to have the document for information purposes. The US stressed that this would be a facilitated discussion and would NOT result in a decision. The totality of discussion would be constructive to an Implementation Plan drafting team. Australia agreed with the suggestion of having a facilitated discussion lead by a Co-Chair. There is a need to be careful to describe the range of GEO-Plus scenarios, where within that continuum Ministers could offer guidance. If we over-categorize at this point, it gives the impression that the GEO community has reached a foregone conclusion. The US stated that the shorter document could be used to indicate that we are asking where along the spectrum of GEO-Plus possibilities we should land. In this case, the scenarios needed to be removed so that we can talk more broadly about trajectories and an end state. The Chair requested a small task team to review the document in this direction and how this will be incorporated in the Ministerial agenda.

The Chair summarized the work of the task team (EC, South Africa, Japan, US and the Secretariat). It is envisaged that a facilitated discussion will occur in the agenda of the Ministerial. It will consist of an initial presentation of the request for guidance and short optional responses provided by Ministers. Responses will be tallied, but with no attribution or any reference in the Ministerial official documents, but the outcomes of the session will be provided to an Implementation Plan drafting team for guidance. The one-page summary document will be included in the Ministerial folder for consultation, but rather than providing specific scenarios, it will provide a range/spectra of options. The document will footnote the following sentence: “For more information and details please refer to the Vision for GEO 2025 and the Pathway to GEOSS 2025 documents.” The longer paper will NOT be part of the Ministerial folder but will be included in the Plenary documents. The shorter document will also reference establishing an Implementation Plan drafting team.

The Executive Committee agreed to this approach. Japan expressed their thanks to all members for having listened to all concerns.

3 GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Target Progress (Document 11 – for consultation)

Mr Ivan Deloatch introduced this document, which is a draft of the 2013 Assessment of Progress against the GEOSS 2015 Strategic Targets that will be presented to the GEO-X Plenary on 15-16 January 2014. Mr Deloatch thanked the Secretariat for their collaboration in putting together the report and in particular, to Hendrik Baeyens for producing an automated tool for data collection and Alexia Massacand for her role in streamlining the process. He noted the need to improve communication among the three Boards.

Discussion:

UK felt that the presentation of the report was a great improvement and suggested that a short rationale behind the ratings, which was included in previous editions, be included. Australia presumed that the fulfilling of the listed Recommendations would result in the indicator colour changing from yellow to green, however this was not entirely clear and would like the linkages clarified. The US noted that the User Engagement Target had no listed actions and proposed that some thought be given to raise User Engagement and what should be done over the next few years. They hoped that the new design of the Portal would play a positive role in this regard.

29.8 Action: Secretariat to refine Target Progress report:

- Include in future reports a paragraph on the rationale for grading;
- Clearer mapping from recommended actions to solutions be indicated.

3.2 Update from Data Sharing Working Group (Document 12 - for information)

Ms Lerato Senoko presented an Update from the Data Sharing Working Group (DSWG). She encouraged further participation and cooperation from Members and Participating Organisations with the DSWG. It was noted that the group now had 20 members, which were organised in 4 sub-groups: GEOSS DataCORE and GCI, legal interoperability, data documentation, capacity building and Post-2015 Working Group contributors. The overall implementation of the GEOSS Data Sharing Action Plan is making progress and the Group has extended its activities to address all its objectives. Additional resources are still required from developing countries. The Group is planning a Side Event for GEO-X.

Discussion:

The EC commented that communication is an important activity of the Working Group and requested the Group to strengthen its activities in this regard. The US and UK noted that the collection of user metrics is part of the Group's work and asked whether there was a selection of specific metrics that would be tracked in the future. They also noted that this activity be reported at the next Executive Committee.

29.9 Action: Secretariat/GCI Team and DSWG requested to provide report on mechanism for tracking user metrics in GEO.

3.3 Renewal of Implementation Board Membership (Document 13 – for consultation)

Dr Alexia Massacand of the Secretariat presented this document. The document follows a document presented at the 28th Executive Committee and the request of the Executive Committee for the Secretariat to provide recommendations on the top eight candidates for Implementation Board Membership.

Dr Massacand explained that the criteria defined at GEO-IX for the selection of Board members were:

- Bring expertise relevant to the Terms of Reference of the Board;

- Have access to adequate resources (time in particular) for active participation.

Selection should be also based on complementarities among the selected candidates. The selection would be valid for one year from the Plenary. The level of activity of Board members will be tracked by the Secretariat. If an expert is repeatedly inactive the Board is entitled to recommend his or her non-re-appointment. She went through the Infrastructure and Institution and Development lists of candidates and provided the rationale for the proposed members.

Discussion:

The US stated that it is essential that the Implementation Boards be empowered by the participation of GEO Members. Australia sought clarification on the number of experts considered for membership of IBs. The Secretariat is proposing 10 members.

The Chair requested if there were any objections to 10 Board members. None were expressed. The recommendations of the Secretariat were accepted.

3.4 GCI Demonstration

Osamu Ochiai of the Secretariat on behalf of the GCI team presented the current status of the usability of the GEO Web Portal. This was in response to the request of the 28th session of the Executive Committee in July that called for a focus on the effort in this regard for the Sprint to Summit initiative. ESA has been working through an EU project, on the redesign of the Portal since January 2013 and has benefitted from the close cooperation of CNR and JRC. Since July, the GEO Secretariat has also been helping with this redesign of the GEOSS Portal to improve usability and access.

Mr Ochiai gave the overview prepared by the GCI team of the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI), which consists of the GEO Web Portal that provides seamless access to the services of a Discovery and Access Broker (DAB) and Resource Registration. Mr Ochiai included in his presentation an explanation of the main differences of a GCI search compared to a Google or Google Earth search. While tools such as Google are general instruments to discover generic content and serve a broad-spectrum audience, the GCI is a specialized system supporting discovery and access of Earth observations.

Dr Guido Colangeli of ESA demonstrated the new features of the GEOSS portal. These include a new design which provides greater harmony with the GEO Website, previews of variable layers depending on search criteria, definition of regions through a cropping box and multilingual search capabilities.

Mr Ochiai explained that the current efforts will be continued and the next steps in the Sprint to Summit initiative are:

- The new Portal will be released at the end of November;
- GEO Secretariat and CNR will continue to work with Data providers to facilitate the discovery and access of datasets, which will start with GEOSS DataCORE implementation;
- Guidance manuals for users and providers will be developed and there will be a monitoring and evaluation of the accessibility of the desired datasets;
- The GCI team will make a demonstration of scenarios and comparison with Google Search at Plenary;
- Usability testing will be provided in the Exhibition area.

Discussion:

The Executive Committee applauded the progress made by the Team, and thanked them for the demonstration. The Chair noted that the portal and its capabilities have increased phenomenally since the last Executive Committee meeting. She underlined the importance that appearances and negative experiences of websites have a harmful consequence on the overall impression of the whole programme. She applauded the progress that had been made and expected an effective demonstration at Plenary that would show true capabilities of GEO.

Australia noted the explanations on the data standards and was pleased to see the utilization of the WMS standard, while concerned that using an extension of basic metadata profiles implies increased maintenance. The EC, thanked the GCI Team for the demonstration, and echoed Australia's concern regarding the sustainability of the current operation of the GCI. There is a need for a user-friendly system that will continue to work in the future. Dr Stefano Nativi of CNR explained that the current approach was to build on existing capabilities. The brokering approach will seek to leverage provider's systems without requesting any changes to the data in order to ensure the entire system is sustainable. The Director of the Secretariat explained that the recent GEO strategy based on a Discovery and Access Broker (DAB) has significantly powered GEOSS data search and discovery allowing one single interface to search multiple repositories. The US questioned the amount of tweaking of the Datasets and suggested that GEO had a role in collecting *ad hoc* changes to standards, which could drive revisions to standards in collaboration with the Standards Organisations particularly through the Communities of Practice. Dr Nativi explained that GEOSS is using well-accepted international standards such as ISO and OGC and is also contributing to their development. These standards are addressing the fundamental layer aimed at sharing data within or across areas.

South Africa asked if the current system would be able to provide information on the changes in land cover affecting biodiversity and ecosystems. Australia explained that the datasets may be discoverable but not the analytics and that there was a need to manage expectations. South Africa felt that we are at a starting point of the GEOSS we want to construct and this could also have an impact on Governance and if we are asking the Private Sector to add value by producing analytic products, how can GEO benefit from this. It was stated that we can see the potential for products to be provided by service providers, and as long as the purpose of the offerings was non-commercial this should not be a problem. The EC commented that the GCI provides access to time series that can be exploited by users so that they can assess the situation of their environment (for instance land cover), but at this early stage there is not always the end product available through the GCI to get a direct information regarding the status of the environment. So regarding land cover evolution it might be still needed that the user transform the different time series into final information. Australia emphasised that they are taking the view that data is part of infrastructure and a necessity for building the economy. Attempts to make returns on the provision of data would be short-sighted; there is a value in demonstrating the availability of data and the applications that could be made available using the data. Australia further suggested establishing a forum of programmers to come up with possible applications in a "Hack-Fest" or "Hackathon" fashion. The UK supported this view of not constraining third parties from using the Portal, which could be used by Universities, Research Institutes, Private Sector – some for profit, some not. They added that there is a need to address the current lack of awareness of the Portal.

The Chair thanked the GCI team again for bringing the Portal to this point. The Director of the Secretariat encouraged all to use the new Portal upon its release at the end of November and to provide feedback on what works and what doesn't, and whether or not the data is being provided as you expected, etc.

4 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

4.1 Executive Committee Response to the 4th GEOSS Evaluation Working Group (Document 14 – for consultation)

Mr Giovanni Rum of the Secretariat presented this document. He explained that this was an attempt to identify actions to be taken in response to the Executive Committee that will go to Plenary in order to request the various identified agencies to take up the recommendations.

Discussion:

The US felt that in response to Recommendation 7 performance indicators or metrics should be established at some point in the future, but not necessarily now. They recognised that this has been a struggle, but suggested it is possible to identify some that can be tracked and can follow directly from the evolution of GEOSS. The UK challenged Recommendation 8, which advises a reduction in the number of targets, and suggested that the targets be made more focused and measurable. The EC concurred with responses outlined in the document together with the suggestions made.

The Chair concluded that with the proposed changes the document should be presented at Plenary.

29.10 Action: Secretariat to modify document with respect to Recommendations 7 and 8.

4.1.1 Progress on Implementation of Recommendations from GEOSS Evaluations

4.1.2 Status of the next Evaluation (Weather, Water and Climate)

Craig Larlee of the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group presented these two items. Firstly, in response to the Action Item from the previous Executive Committee meeting, which requested more explanation on the colour coding applied in the Report on Progress of Implementation of M & E. Mr Larlee explained that there was a certain amount of subjectivity in the application of the coloured ratings. There was a degree of interpretation with regard to the green and red ratings. While the blue and yellow ratings had been easier to assess. Secondly, Mr Larlee explained that there would be a focus on the “added-value” of GEO in the 5th Evaluation, which will be on Weather, Water and Climate. There will be an investigation on the projects that have been initiated, which otherwise would not have occurred. There would be an attempt to differentiate the work of the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group from the work of the Implementation Boards and a focus on End-Users. The Monitoring and Evaluation Team is sensitive to issues between GCOS, WMO and GEO and would be looking at ways to improve the relationship.

The Work Plan scheduled data collection to be done through December, surveys distributed through March, drafting of report in April and factual review by Secretariat in April (which will include findings but not recommendations). The Recommendations will be developed in May; final meeting 1st week of June and the 1st draft of final report will be issued in June 2014.

Discussion:

The UK thanked the team and asked for clarification on the categorizations specifically concerning the superseded category, which was asked for at last Plenary. Mr Larlee responded that this would be taken on board for the next evaluation.

The Chair thanked the team.

29.11 Action: Secretariat to draft letter to GEO Principals on behalf of Evaluation Team requesting:

- List of relevant evaluations, reports with web links or contacts where these may be obtained;

- List of potential contacts for surveys or interviews, particularly from information user perspectives.

5 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

5.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 16 – for consultation)

The Director of the Secretariat presented this Document. She noted the Highlights section with the GEOGLAM Crop Outlook Assessment that was successively delivered to AMIS. She further noted that the Technical Experts' revised Terms of Reference will include a stronger interface role with the GCI. The Secretariat has, in response to the request of the last Executive Committee identified resources within the Secretariat to take over support of the GEOSS DataCORE. The new portrayal of fixed-term, short-term, secondments and special initiative contracts is now included within the report. Within the subject of Outreach, several countries expressed interest in joining GEO as a result of the Mission briefing regarding the Ministerial. The Director of the Secretariat further suggested that the results components on the Mission Travel should be further strengthened for future reports.

Discussion:

The EC thanked the Secretariat for the report and requested clarification on Appendix 1, which contains a date when documentation was sent to requesting prospective Members and Participating Organizations, regarding whether there was mechanism for reminding them after months of inactivity or whether to delete the information. Ms. Ryan suggested that the information is still useful as Caucuses may want to take a more active role in following-up with specific candidates; and it was also good to help with potentially duplicative results. China stated that they could provide contact details for the UNECAP. UK very much welcomed this report and felt that the Secretariat has responded well to Executive Committee requests.

The Chair concluded that the report shows a productive several months and thanked the Secretariat for the report and the underlying work.

5.2 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure (Document 17 – for information)

Ms Patricia Geddes of the Secretariat presented this report. She noted that in response to the request of the Executive Committee actual spending on contractors is reported separately. She further noted there is a deficit for the period but that should be rectified by year's end.

Discussion:

The EC requested information on the surplus carryover from 2012. Ms Geddes explained that this is an income and expenditure report, the surplus is not included in these Statements. The balance from previous a year's exercise is not usually included in a cash flow statement, however this may be the object of a foot note within the statement.

The report was noted.

5.3 Management of GEO Trust Fund (Document 18 – for consultation)

Working Capital Fund

Ms Geddes presented this item from Document 18. The intent was to request the Executive Committee to make a recommendation to Plenary to initiate this fund as of 2014. The current fund balance of around CHF2.0 million is reserved to cover the obligations of salaries for the coming fiscal year. The Working Capital Fund is needed to fund day-to-day operations during the periods when expenditures exceed contributions.

Discussion:

Australia requested whether this fund would build on the current CHF2.0 million to reach CHF3.0 million as working capital. Ms Geddes stated that the reserve of CHF 2.0 million is a WMO requirement for salaries and not to be used for working capital. The intent is to label this as a Working Capital Fund and separate it from the CHF2.0 million. The EC stated that they share concerns that without a WCF it would be difficult to carry out day-to-day operations. The European Caucus has mandated us to support the creation of such a fund in principle but our position is that in its initial stages, no additional contributions could be made available from the European Commission before it is demonstrated that initially the Working Capital Fund will be constituted using savings made from the Trust Fund.

The Chair summarised that the Recommendation to Plenary should clarify that the Working Capital Fund is in addition to the CHF2.0 million Trust Fund reserve.

29.12 Action: Secretariat to clarify that Working Capital Fund is in addition to CHF 2 million salary reserve required by WMO.

Overhead for Special Initiatives

Ms Geddes presented this second item from Document 18. This proposal was in response to the Executive Committee to provide further rationale on the rate proposed for the percentage to be charged as an overhead on special initiatives. Ms Geddes explained that using the example of the calculation of the WMO overhead, a calculation had been made using the same rationale and a figure of 10% resulted. The proposal is to charge a proportion of the services provided by the Director, External Relations, Work Plan Coordination, Administration, Finance and Information Technology. The costs associated with these functions represent 10% of the current budget of the Secretariat.

Discussion:

The EC stated that for Plenary, it would be helpful to have more information and a broader picture on the overhead issue and would like to see the basis for the 10% calculation. South Africa asked for clarification that the special initiatives are not being 'double charged'. What is being provided for the ten percent over and above the usual overhead? The Director of the Secretariat explained that at the last Plenary there was a request to further assess the cost of the special initiatives as compared to the rest of the Trust Fund contributions. This was intended to cover work done on the special initiatives as compared to the other Tasks in the Work Plan. She noted that both Norway and Australia, -- those currently funding the GFOI Special Initiative -- have been consulted and are in agreement with this approach. Australia agreed that they are comfortable that special initiatives need to pay an additional overhead to the Secretariat, however, would like to see transparency in how the 10% is calculated and would rather see the percentage taken as the money is expended rather than at the time of contribution.

29.13 Action: Secretariat to clarify calculation of 10% overhead rate and explore whether rate can be taken at expenditure and not at time of contribution. Ref: Plenary GEO-IX.

5.4 Review of Participating Organisation and Observer Applications (Document 19 for consultation)

The Director of the Secretariat presented this document. Five applications for Participating Organization status and one recommendation for Observer status were deemed to have met the selection criteria and are put forward for recommendation at GEO-X. The applications from BEC, Balkan Environment Centre, CC, Creative Commons Organization, MTS, The Marine Technology Society and UCAR, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research required more information before a decision to recommend to Plenary can be made.

Discussion:

The UK noted that the Rules of Procedure required that subsidiaries of national members are subject to special approval. ITC and UCAR are national organizations. Also are not EUSatCen activities already represented through the European Commission? The Director of the Secretariat responded that in the case of ITC, they were originally part of UNESCO, but were later administratively moved to the Netherlands. The GEO Principal from Netherlands has recommended that ITC be granted Participating Organization status. It was also stated that ITC is one of the few international organizations focused on institutional capacity building, and has the potential of making significant progress in this regard for GEO. The Secretariat recommended EUSatCen be approved, as they are administratively similar to EEA which is already a Participating Organization in GEO. The US was concerned that UCAR could be wholly private sector and solely American. The Director of the Secretariat stated that while UCAR can make substantial contributions to GEO's work, they are more likely to be considered when the Private Sector, Foundation and Development Bank strategy is in place. Australia wondered why a conservative approach to Participating Organization applications is being taken when GEO should be reaching out to as many potential partners as possible, and especially to those that have expressed interest in joining GEO and contributing to building GEOSS.

29.14 Action: Secretariat to clarify conditional recommendations on four of the applications to become Participating Organizations. (BEC, Balkan Environment Centre, CC, Creative Commons Organization, MTS, The Marine Technology Society and UCAR, University Corporation for Atmospheric Research)

6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**6.1 Update on Communication Strategy (Document 20 – for Information)**

Mr Robert Samors of the Secretariat presented this Document. He noted that this constituted an Executive Summary and main findings of a 150 page report. The larger document is useful since it is a thorough analysis of where we are, provides a good history, and presents recommendations that are helpful and detailed. One aspect, which pointed to the confusion between GEO and GEOSS has already led to the Secretariat doing some rebranding in this regard. The Secretariat will be receiving the final report containing a Road Map that details suggest next steps and priority areas in November.

Discussion:

The EC welcomed the appointment of the in-house external relations manager and appreciated the executive summary report. There, however, was a concern that the full report will only be available in November and asked whether this will be presented to Plenary for acceptance. The Director thought that the report would be made available to the Executive Committee as it should contain practical recommendations on what to do as a matter of priority. The Executive Committee could provide input to the report and consult with their own Communication Experts. Australia expressed their appreciation that external expertise had been sought by the Secretariat through a consultancy. The report outlines challenges and opportunities and Australia is looking forward to seeing the recommendations regarding the next steps. The UK expressed some concern that the report contained too much marketing jargon. The Secretariat agreed, but felt that the underlying concepts were valid and had worked to reduce jargon in the final report.

6.2 Update on Private Sector Initiative and Think Tank Process

Mr Samors gave an update on the Private Sector Initiative and Think Tank process. A Think Tank had been held on Monday 28th October with representatives of the Private Sector and international organisations. The objective of the Think Tank was to propose ways forward for GEO to consider more involvement of the Private Sector with GEO and the GEOSS implementation process. In

particular, the participants were requested to consider the usefulness of organising a Private Sector Engagement forum or platform that would facilitate the interface with the GEO Community. The process had produced four main findings:

- 1) GEO needs to sharpen its public offering or value proposition;
- 2) Rather than a large forum, there was a strong desire for future interactions to be focused by sector – small groupings of people in the same sector, not CEOs but decision-makers in marketing research and technology;
- 3) There needs to be within GEO a single point of contact for private industry to approach, also looking out for opportunities to engage with private sector;
- 4) There should be a big neon sign that GEO has data, also important to keep in mind that we have a lot of work to close gaps in data, room for non-EO people to engage in this endeavour.

Ms Castle represented the Executive Committee at this event. She stated that this was a highly worthwhile exercise and the people who participated were high-level, good thinkers and from a diverse spectrum of the private sector. Many had governmental and private sector involvement experience and could understand the limits within which GEO operates. At end of the day, there were different 5-point plans that were proposed, which will be synthesized in a report. Amongst others the Hack-a-thon idea was proposed. Questions were raised on the limits of GEO in supplying data – would be valuable if GEO could provide a platform for mash-ups, and how far can GEO take things under inter-governmental supervision. There was a lot of discussion which hinged on GEO's operational space and legal status.

EC comment after the meeting as they were not present when this point concluded: Collaboration with the Private Sector has yet to be decided. It should be framed in the context of the drafting of the next 10-year implementation plan and reference document

Discussion:

Australia commented that GEO might be driven in the direction of becoming a mash-up platform in the context of big data. Datasets are becoming too big to move around – the model that GEO provides data needs to be rethought; rather than create spaces and places where users interact with data. The federated idea of bringing data to Users works when datasets are small, but GEO needs to rethink this paradigm. Canada commented on the Sector approach recommended by the Think Tank and looked forward to seeing development along these lines.

29.15 Action: Secretariat to produce draft communications plan/roadmap by March 2014 Executive Committee meeting.

6.3 Proposed Modifications to Rules of Procedure

The Director of the Secretariat presented this document. All proposed modifications are in track changes and related mainly to eliminating confusing language around the timing of production of documents and reports. The Private Sector paragraphs were removed from page 8, section 6, as this was the same text as in Annex F.

The US felt that there was still need to find distinction between Participating Organizations and Observers. This was seconded by Australia, and that more thought is given to grouping Participating Organizations.

29.16 Action: Secretariat to clarify definitions of POs and Observers by March 2014.

7 SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

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

Dr Cripe reviewed the main outcomes and Action Items from the Committee meeting for clarity and consensus.

The Co-Chair of China, on behalf of the other Co-Chairs, thanked everyone for their hard work, and thanked the US for excellent Chairing. We have clearer guidance on how to make the next Ministerial a success and we have a path to go forward. He hoped that all the hard work would contribute to a successful Summit.

The US Chair thanked all Members for a productive meeting and the Secretariat staff for their dedication.

Meeting adjourned at 18:00

29th GEO Executive Committee

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