

Draft Report
34th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 7-8 July 2015
(As accepted at the 35th Executive Committee Meeting)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The meeting was chaired by Dr Philemon Mjwara, the GEO Co-Chair representing the Republic of South Africa. Over the course of two days, the Committee considered and acted upon the following issues:

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The Agenda was adopted with one modification.

The Draft Report of the 33rd Session of the Executive Committee was left open for one further revision (completed, 21 July 2015).

The Actions Items from Previous meetings were all closed.

The Secretariat Director provided an update on Secretariat activities, highlighting the addition of Zimbabwe as GEO's 98th Member.

2 PREPARATIONS FOR GEO WEEK, MINISTERIAL SUMMIT AND THE GEO-PLenary

Presentations were made by Mexico, United States and Secretariat on various aspects of preparations for events in Mexico City in November 2015. The Committee recommended modifications to the Ministerial Declaration, Ministerial Agenda and Plenary Agenda.

3 REVIEW OF, AND GUIDANCE ON, DRAFT V2.2 OF GEO STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2025: IMPLEMENTING GEOSS

The draft Strategic plan was presented by a co-chair of the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG). The Committee guided the IPWG to create separate "Strategy" and "Implementation" sections to the Plan, held over further discussion of GEO's legal status until 2016, and recommended changes to several governance issues in the report.

4 ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY SUB-GROUP REPORT

The report was presented by the United States, a member of the sub-group, indicating the Engagement Strategy is for the entire GEO community, not only the Secretariat. The Committee accepted the report, agreed that it should now be implemented and that it should remain compatible with the

Strategic Plan. The Committee requested that clarifying language is inserted concerning the principles for private sector engagement, and that the Secretariat develop a draft.

5 A LEGAL STATUS FOR GEO – NEXT STEPS

The Committee deliberated the way forward on this issue and decided to continue consideration at the 36th Session of the Executive Committee in 2016.

6 GEO TRANSITIONAL WORK PROGRAMME 2016

The Committee considered the draft Work Programme and supported the Secretariat prioritizing the proposed Foundational Tasks. The Committee also decided that only one category of Initiatives would be included in the 2016 Transitional Work Programme. The proposed Programme Board will evaluate each Flagship application for 2017 and beyond.

7 GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION

The Committee considered a number of documents and presentations, including reports from the 6th Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group, the Infrastructure Implementation Board and the Institutions and Development Board. The Committee also accepted a report on lessons learned from the transition of the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) and instructed the Secretariat to codify best practices for future transitions of pre-operational initiatives to host organizations.

8 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

The Committee accepted the Secretariat Operations report with a suggested modification in future reports. The Committee received presentations on the Financial Statements 2014 and Audit Report, both of which found GEO's financial situation to be good, with GEO receiving an unqualified (i.e., clean) audit report. Concern continues to be raised about the alignment of expenditure to income due to the unpredictable timing of contributions.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Committee recognized and thanked Dr Susan Barrell (Australia) and Mr Yoshiaki Kinoshita (Japan) for their dedicated service to GEO upon their retirement from the Executive Committee.

ACTION ITEMS FROM 34TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The deliberations of the Committee resulted in the following Action Items:

(Date of Completion in Italics)

- Action 34.1 Italy to review proposed revised text to 33rd Executive Committee Report and provide comments to Secretariat *(Completed, 21 July 2015)*.
- Action 34.2 Secretariat to modify draft Plenary Agenda *(Completed, 8 July 2015)*.
- Expand Day One, Session 2 “Summit documents discussion /Draft Declaration / Strategic Plan” from 2.5 to 3 hours;
 - Switch order of Day One, Session 2 and Day One, Session 3 “Report on GEOSS Implementation 2005-2015 (includes Monitoring and Evaluation).”
- Action 34.3 GEO Principals to identify and coordinate with their lead government negotiators/Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) representatives regarding the importance of Earth observations in the SDG process *(Immediate / Report from Executive Committee Members on teleconference 9 September 2015)*.
- Secretariat to provide background information *(Completed, 15 July 2015)*.
- Action 34.4 GEO Principals to work with their UN Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGGIM) Principals to insure stronger linkages nationally and internationally between geospatial information and Earth observations *(30 July 2015 / Report from Executive Committee Members on teleconference 9 September 2015)*.
- Secretariat to provide background information *(Completed, 24-28 July 2015)*.
- Action 34.5 Secretariat to incorporate language modifications in Engagement Strategy regarding development of partnerships with commercial entities *(Completed, 8 July 2015)*.
- Action 34.6 Secretariat to develop draft criteria for partnerships with commercial entities *(Draft to be distributed to Executive Committee 14 August 2015 (Completed, 17 August 2015) / Executive Committee comments due 28 August 2015 / Executive Committee teleconference 9 September 2015)*
- Action 34.7 Secretariat to arrange for experts to present models of international organizations *(1st Executive Committee Meeting in 2016)*.
- Secretariat to ensure examples include Square Kilometre Array and participation of Swiss legal expert.
- Action 34.8 Secretariat to prepare analysis of current “Foundational Tasks”, including cost estimates *(Draft distributed to be distributed to Executive Committee 14 August 2015)*

(Completed, 17 August 2015) / Executive Committee comments due 28 August 2015 / Executive Committee teleconference 9 September 2015).

- Preliminary indication of priorities.

- Action 34.9 Secretariat to prepare initial response on behalf of Executive Committee to Report on the 6th GEOSS Evaluation, including the framework for an Executive Committee reflection on GEO's first decade *(1 September 2015)*.
- Action 34.10 Infrastructure Implementation Board (IIB) to provide language to Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) on GEOSS evolution and governance, including usability, for Strategic Plan *(Completed, 15 July 2015)*.
- Action 34.11 Institutions and Development Board (IDIB) to provide language to IPWG on growing and sustaining the GEO community *(Completed, 18 July 2015)*.
- Action 34.12 Secretariat to propose to IPWG language to codify best practices/procedures for transfer of pre-operational Initiatives to host organizations (e.g., GFOI→FAO) *(31 August 2015)*.
- Action 34.13 Secretariat to invite GFOI partners to provide additional input on lessons learned from early stages of initiative *(Immediate (Completed, 22 July 2015) / Response requested by 15 August 2015)*.
- Action 34.14 Secretariat to develop draft criteria for evaluation/acceptance of Observers and Participating Organizations *(Draft to be distributed to Executive Committee 14 August 2015 (Completed, 17 August 2015) / Executive Committee comments due 28 August 2015 / Executive Committee teleconference 9 September 2015)*.

Draft Report
34th Executive Committee Meeting
Geneva, Switzerland, 7-8 July 2015

Full Report**Tuesday, 8 July 2015***Meeting convened at 10:00*

Chair: Dr Philemon Mjwara

The Chair welcomed all participants and asked the Co-Chairs to make opening remarks.

The China Co-Chair noted his appreciation for the work done by the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) and the Secretariat in preparation for the meeting. He expressed hope that the meeting would contribute adequate advice to help finalise the Strategic Plan. He noted that China plans to release the data related to an ecological environment report for 2014. He closed by inviting the Committee to attend the Asia-Pacific Symposium in Beijing in September.

The European Commission Co-Chair noted that Earth Observations were climbing the order of priority on the agendas of many countries and this presented a significant opportunity for GEO. It could become a more practical organization delivering active applications for governments as well as the commercial sector and citizens in general, centered on further development of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). The challenge is to move from partnership building to the construction of a system of systems at the services of society. These are the messages the Ministers should receive at the Mexico City Summit, while providing the Ministers with adequate opportunity to provide guidance on GEO's next decade. He noted that choices would be made; GEO cannot sustain such an ambitious agenda without serious support. GEO relies on regional engagement and requires political support, a large dose of goodwill and voluntary inputs.

The United States Co-Chair noted that there remains a great amount of work to prepare for the Ministerial Summit. The challenge for the next decade is how we identify the means to address the issues. She commended the various Working Groups for framing the issues for Committee consideration in a way that will enable the Committee to ensure the Ministers will be able to provide guidance on how GEO can address the issues they face.

The South Africa Co-Chair noted that the Strategic Plan begins to provide a framing for 2016 – 2025. He thanked the IPWG for its responsiveness to the Executive Committee's comments at the previous meeting, and thanked the Secretariat for preparation of documents that are simple and easy to follow. He called upon the Committee Members to consider closely all the documents that are noted for consultations, as they will inform the Strategic Plan. He looked forward to the discussion on the preparations for the Ministerial Summit, noting the Committee must ensure we handle the transition from the old Work Plan to the new Work Programme very well.

The Chair noted that the representative from Japan (Mr Kinoshita) and Australia (Dr Barrell) are attending their final meeting. Mr Kinoshita expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve on the Committee and work with the Secretariat. Dr Barrell indicated she would provide her summary reflections at the end of the meeting.

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (*Document 1 - for approval*)

The Chair proposed Agenda Item 8 become Agenda Item 3(B) and stressed to the Committee that several of the later discussion items, including the Board presentations, will make key recommendations that will strengthen the Strategic Plan.

Document 1 was Approved as amended.

1.2 Draft Report of the 33rd Executive Committee Meeting (*Document 2 - for approval*)

Discussion focused on amending the text as requested by Italy.

Action 34.1 Italy to review proposed revised text to 33rd Executive Committee Report and provide comments to Secretariat (*Completed, 21 July 2015*).

1.3 Review of Actions from Previous Meetings (*Document 3 - for approval*)

Ms Barbara Ryan, Secretariat Director, indicated that some actions are addressed as documents in the agenda, and suggested that at the end of the meeting the Committee review whether the documents meet the identified actions. Regarding Action Item 33.4, the Secretariat is sharing copies of the Ministerial invitations with the respective GEO Principals for follow up action.

1.4 Update on Secretariat Activities (*Presentation – for information*)

Ms Barbara Ryan, Secretariat Director, presented the update, noting there are now 98 GEO Members with the recent addition of Zimbabwe, and 87 Participating Organizations. She highlighted several examples of engagements with these institutions, such as collaborating with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) on the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, and working with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) during its Congress on the open access to data resolution. She noted advances in the private sector engagement, particularly with data providers and value providers centered on the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI), reaffirmed the importance of open access and data sharing, and the need to communicate to Ministers the economic analysis on the benefit of open data to the governments. The Director pointed to continued global engagement on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the UN Global Geographic Information Management (UNGGIM) initiative, the Belmont Forum (which funds Future Earth) and UN Water.

2 PREPARATIONS FOR GEO WEEK, MINISTERIAL SUMMIT AND THE GEO-XII PLENARY (*DOCUMENT 4 - FOR CONSULTATION*)

2.1 GEO Week

Mr Eduardo De La Torre Bárcena, Mexico, provided an update on preparations for the Mexico City Ministerial Summit stating that all of the invitation letters to Ministers had been signed personally by the Mexican Foreign Minister. He reminded the Committee that the GEO-XII Plenary will be held in the Hilton Reforma Hotel and the Ministerial will be held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which are in proximity. He also noted that the Latin America Geospatial Forum (LAGF) and the UNGGIM: Americas meeting are also being held the same week at the Hilton. The Ministerial Dinner will be held on 12 November, following the Ministers tour of the Exhibition.

Mr Robert Samors, GEO Secretariat, provided a brief update on GEO Week Communications noting completion of the banner and slogan, launch of the 2015 GEO Short Video Competition, increased use of social media and identification of potential media stories. He noted that Ms Katy Anderson was recently hired as a short term Communications Manager to work on communications and outreach for

the Ministerial and GEO Week. He also stressed that the press conference immediately following the Ministerial must focus on compelling announcements of national and regional investments, and initiatives that will address pressing environmental and social issues. A request for such information will be sent to all GEO Principals soon.

2.2 Ministerial Preparations

2.3 GEO-XII Plenary Preparations

Draft Ministerial Summit Agenda

Mr Giovanni Rum, GEO Secretariat, presented an overview of the Ministerial agenda. The Committee expressed the need for more specificity, especially regarding Session 4, Ministers Exchange of Views on GEO 2016-2025 and the implementation of GEOSS. The session should provide Ministers with an opportunity to exchange views on global challenges, how they are responding to them at the national level, and how GEO could assist. The session could benefit from “guiding questions” distributed to the Ministers in advance.

The Committee instructed the Ministerial Working Group to shorten Session 3, Declaration Approval, and lengthen Session 4, and requested that a more structured outline of Session 4 be presented the following day.

The United States stated it would commit the funds necessary to retain professional reporting services for the GEO-XII Plenary and Ministerial Summit.

Draft Plenary Agenda

Mr Giovanni Rum, GEO Secretariat, presented an overview of the Plenary agenda. The Committee felt there should be explicit focus on GEO global initiatives, as well as expanding the time allotted to discussion of the Strategic Plan. The Committee also proposed switching Day One, Session 2, “Summit documents discussion /Draft Declaration / Strategic Plan” and Day One, Session 3, Report on GEOSS Implementation 2005-2015 (includes Monitoring and Evaluation)”.

Action 34.2 Secretariat to modify Plenary Agenda (*Completed, 8 July 2015*).

- **Expand Day One, Session 2 “Summit documents discussion /Draft Declaration / Strategic Plan” from 2.5 to 3 hours;**
- **Switch order of Day One, Session 2 and Day One, Session 3 “Report on GEOSS Implementation 2005-2015 (includes Monitoring and Evaluation).”**

Draft Ministerial Declaration

Mr John Matuszak, United States, presented the draft Ministerial Declaration. The Committee acknowledged the improvements to the document. The Committee’s recommendations for streamlining and sharpening the focus of the text would be taken into consideration by the drafting committee.

3 REVIEW OF, AND GUIDANCE ON, DRAFT V2.2 OF GEO STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2025: IMPLEMENTING GEOSS (*DOCUMENT 5 – FOR CONSULTATION*)

Dr Danielle Lacasse, Canada and Co-chair of the IPWG, presented an overview of the current draft of the Strategic Plan on behalf of the Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG). She noted the following modifications from the previous draft and the issues for consideration by the Executive Committee:

- Better definition of the unique value of GEO and its convening power;
- Emphasis on the usefulness of Earth observations (EO) in solving societal problems;

- Societal Benefit Areas are more impact oriented;
 - Inclusion of a structured process to define essential EO user needs;
 - Strategic objectives refined;
 - GEOSS more fully defined as a set of coordinated independent systems;
 - Governance structure reflects that policy authority comes from Ministers; and
 - Explanation of the mutual benefit to the private sector of engaging with GEO.
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- For Executive Committee consideration:
 - Alternate governance model for Co-Chairs, selecting a lead for a given year;
 - Strengthening application process for Members and POs through a set of criteria, wherein applicants are required to endorse the Strategic Plan and other relevant directional documents;
 - Need for clarity on the legal status wording; and
 - Feedback on the Terms of Reference for the Executive Committee and Programme Board.

The Committee applauded the IPWG for its diligence and the excellent consultative process it has employed in developing the Strategic Plan and accompanying documents. Discussion focused on several key elements: the structure of the document, GEO's legal status, governance, integration of "climate" across all Societal Benefit Areas, and voluntary indicative contributions.

Document structure: The consensus of the Committee is that there needs to be a clearer separation of the "strategic" (focusing on "what" GEO strives to accomplish) and "implementation" (focusing on "how" the work will be accomplished) elements of the Plan. The Committee advised that the main body of the Strategic Plan have a first section focused on the strategy followed by a section on implementation. The strategy section should appeal to Ministers through the articulation of GEO's higher order goals and principles, and its convening power. South Africa offered to assist in the restructuring of the documents. The Chair noted that Implementation Boards might also be able to contribute the document.

Legal status: The Committee urged the IPWG to be cautious in its characterization of any path regarding GEO's future legal status. There are concerns that placing GEO under the laws and requirements of any particular country could reduce the flexibility and efficiencies that have made GEO effective to date.

Governance: The Committee did not agree with the IPWG's recommendation that a single Co-Chair manage the Executive Committee each year, or the proposal to change the Co-Chair developed/developing country ratio from 2+2 to 1+1. The Committee agreed that the Programme Board should report to the Executive Committee, but that it might be premature to develop Rules of Procedure for the Programme Board without more clarity on its role and function. The Committee expressed concern about not making the criteria for Participating Organizations too prescriptive, and that the distinction between Flagships and Initiatives needed further clarification.

Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change: The Committee discussed the transformation of "Climate" from a GEO SBA to a cross-cutting focus that will be incorporated into each SBA. The Committee directed the IPWG to ensure the SBAs include a clear and compelling explanation of the fundamental role of adaptation to, and mitigation of, climate change in every area of GEO's Work Programme.

Voluntary indicative contributions: The Committee discussed how to strike the appropriate balance between providing guidance to Members on suggested levels of contributions (e.g., an indicative scale) and not creating the perception of a "requirement" – which would be unacceptable to some countries. The IPWG was instructed to develop alternative scenarios that take into consideration the

fact that some countries would benefit from an indicative scale of contributions and others would not be able to support such an approach.

Adjourned at 18:00

Wednesday 8 July 2015

Meeting convened at 09:00

4 ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Engagement Strategy Sub-Group Report (*Document 7 - for consultation*)

John Matuszak, United States, presented the document on behalf of the Engagement Strategy Sub-Group. He stressed that it is an Engagement Strategy for the entire GEO community, not only for the Secretariat, and the pilot activities identified in the document will succeed only if the community and governments engage directly in their implementation.

The Committee thanked the subgroup for its work and noted the need for a balance between continuing efforts in existing engagement initiatives while undertaking the new activities outlined in the document. Reference was made to the potential to highlight some of the initiatives during the Ministerial as a means to couple national interests with GEO's goals. Executive Committee members were encouraged to discuss the Strategy with their national governments to stimulate their participation, with particular attention to the ongoing UN process to finalize the SDGs and UNGGIM. The Committee also requested that clarifying language concerning the criteria for engagement with the private sector be inserted into the document, and that the Secretariat develop draft criteria.

Document 7 was Approved as amended.

Action 34.3 GEO Principals to identify, and coordinate with their lead government negotiators/Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) representatives regarding the importance of Earth observations in the SDG process (*Immediate / Report from Executive Committee Members on teleconference 9 September 2015*).

- Secretariat to provide background information (*Completed, 15 July 2015*).

Action 34.4 GEO Principals to work with their UN Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGGIM) Principals to insure stronger linkages nationally and internationally between geospatial information and Earth observations (*30 July 2015 / Report from Executive Committee Members on teleconference 9 September 2015*).

- Secretariat to provide background information (*Completed, 24-28 July 2015*).

Action 34.5 Secretariat to incorporate language modifications in Engagement Strategy regarding development of partnerships with commercial entities (*Completed, 8 July 2015*).

Action 34.6 Secretariat to develop draft criteria for partnerships with commercial entities (*Draft to be distributed to Executive Committee 14 August 2015 (Completed, 17 August 2015) / Executive Committee comments due 28 August 2015 / Executive Committee teleconference 9 September 2015*).

5 A LEGAL STATUS FOR GEO – NEXT STEPS (*DOCUMENT 20 – FOR CONSULTATION*)

Ms Barbara Ryan, Secretariat Director, reminded the Committee it had asked the IPWG to transmit its preliminary findings on GEO's legal status to the Executive Committee for further discussion. The purpose of this agenda item was for the Committee to determine the next steps it wants to take on this issue.

The Committee agreed that outside expertise is required to make informed decisions about GEO's future legal status, but noted that legal status issues must be framed in the context of GEO's overall aspirations. Care must be taken to explore both the organizational and procedural ramifications of various legal status options. The Square Kilometre Array (SKA) and CERN were noted as two possible organizational models. The Secretariat was requested to arrange for appropriate experts to brief the Committee at its first meeting in 2016.

Action 34.7 Secretariat to arrange for experts to present models of international organizations (*1st Executive Committee Meeting in 2016*).

- **Secretariat to ensure examples include Square Kilometre Array and participation of Swiss legal expert.**

6 GEO TRANSITIONAL WORK PROGRAMME 2016 (*DOCUMENT 6 - FOR CONSULTATION*)

Mr Giovanni Rum, GEO Secretariat, presented the document, noting that the Transitional Work Programme follows the structure and focus of the draft Strategic Plan. Committee discussion focused on several issues, including Foundational Tasks and Flagships.

Foundational Tasks: The Committee expressed concern that there may be too many Foundational Tasks and directed the Secretariat to provide a prioritized list of Foundational Tasks, including resource allocations that also reflect secondments, for review by the Committee. The agreed Foundational Tasks would be included in the final draft of the 2016 Transitional Work Programme.

Flagships: The Committee expressed concern that the differences between Flagships and Initiatives are still unclear. Further, the process for designating a Flagship would be better undertaken when the Programme Board is in place sometime in 2016. Therefore, the Committee advised that the 2016 Transitional Work Programme would include only Initiatives; any proposed Flagships would be included in the Work Programme as Initiatives, until their application for Flagship status is reviewed by the Programme Board.

Action 34.8 Secretariat to prepare analysis of current “Foundational Tasks”, including cost estimates (*Draft distributed to be distributed to Executive Committee 14 August 2015 (Completed, 17 August 2015) / Executive Committee comments due 28 August 2015 / Executive Committee teleconference 9 September 2015*).

- **Preliminary indication of priorities.**

7 GEOSS IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 Report on the 6th GEOSS Evaluation and Response from the Executive Committee (Document 8 – for consultation)

Dr Lars Ingolf Eide, Norway, presented the document on behalf of the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Working Group. Looking toward GEO's 2nd decade, the primary conclusions of the M&E Working Group include:

- Need for a strategy document that identifies measurable intended outcomes and performance indicators;
- Communication is important both within and external to the GEO organizational structure;
- Need for a high-level task force to promote the incorporation of *in situ* data into GEOSS;
- Better integration of monitoring & evaluation practices within contributed activities;
- User identification and engagement should be improved; and
- Data discovery and accessibility should be improved.

The Committee express its appreciation to the Working Group and to Dr Eide for interrupting his vacation to address the Committee. The Committee noted that the IPWG has already taken into consideration some of the findings and recommendations in the Report, and that the Programme Board will pay close attention to the alignment of resources to proposed tasks.

The Committee accepted the M&E Working Group's request to finalize the report for posting and directed the Secretariat to frame a response document that will allow the Committee to reflect on the past ten years.

Document 8 was approved, pending finalization by the M&E Working group.

Action 34.9 Secretariat to prepare initial response on behalf of Executive Committee to Report on the 6th GEOSS Evaluation, including the framework for an Executive Committee reflection on GEO's first decade (1 September 2015).

7.2 Report on Special Services Agreements

The European Co-Chair reported to the Committee on the final response of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) regarding the use of Special Services Agreements (SSA) by the Secretariat. WMO indicated that it can be reasonably concluded that the SSA contracts were awarded to the three consultants on an individual basis. In light of these conclusions, the answer to the question - to ascertain whether these consultants may have misrepresented their status to the GEO Secretariat or WMO - is, therefore, negative. WMO also identified an improvement, already implemented by GEO, following the recommendation of the Budgetary Working Group to Plenary XI, in the award of SSAs to complement the usual selection criteria, including posting of those contracts over 30,000 CHF on the GEO website, checking whether the service can be provided by the GEO Community and including a representative of the wider GEO Community on the selection panel. The response from WMO, therefore, brings this matter to a close.

7.3 Report from the Infrastructure Implementation Board (Document 9 – for consultation)

Dr Ivan DeLoatch, United States, presented the report on behalf of the Infrastructure Implementation Board (IIB). He noted that, following the instruction from the 33rd Session of the Executive Committee, the IIB continued to refine its assessment of the way forward for GEOSS in 2016-2025, including the three levels of service (Silver, Gold, Platinum), governance and management, modes and methods of implementation and funding requirements and sources.

The Committee thanked the Board and praised the high quality of the document. The Committee agreed with the IIB formulation of the vision for GEOSS. Resourcing issues should continue to be examined, but not included in the Strategic Plan. A key issue continues to be ease of use of the Portal. The Committee instructed the IIB to transmit to the IPWG a description of the vision for GEOSS that includes “usability.” The Board should also continue to further refine its thinking in the other subject areas.

Action 34.10 Infrastructure Implementation Board (IIB) to provide language to Implementation Plan Working Group (IPWG) on GEOSS evolution and governance, including usability, for Strategic Plan (Completed, 15 July 2015).

7.4 Report from Institutions and Development Board (Document 10 – for consultation)

Ms Andiswa Mlisa, GEO Secretariat, presented the document on behalf of the Board, noting that the Institutions and Development Board (IDIB) does not feel that lessons learned from the past several years are sufficiently addressed in the draft Strategic Plan, with respect to sustaining and growing the active participation of Members and Participating Organizations (POs). The Committee acknowledged the loss of participation when the various Work Plan Committees were abolished several years ago.

Document 10 was approved.

Action 34.11 Institutions and Development Board (IDIB) to provide language to IPWG on growing and sustaining the GEO community (Completed, 18 July 2015)

7.5 Report from Societal Benefits Board (Document 11 – for information)

The Executive Committee noted the document and expressed its appreciation to the Societal Benefit Implementation Board. The Committee took particular note of the potentially significant role the Societal Benefit Area communities can play in assisting national and regional governments and organizations in integrating Earth observations in measuring, monitoring and achieving the emerging SDGs. The Committee expressed its eagerness to learn the results of the Target Assessment currently being conducted, and was encouraged that an increasing number of areas of cross-collaboration among SBAs are being identified.

Document 11 was Approved.

7.6 Status of GEOSS Implementation 2005-2015 Report to GEO-XII Plenary (Document 12 – for information)

The Executive Committee took note that the four Reports (listed below) will be presented to the GEO-XII Plenary, and expressed keen interest in hearing the final assessment of GEO’s progress in its first decade.

1. Report of the Sixth and Summative Evaluation of GEOSS Implementation
2. Summary Assessment of Progress – Targets and Tasks
 - PART I - Target Assessment:
 - Final Assessment of Progress Against the GEOSS 2015 Strategic Targets
 - PART II - Task Assessment:
 - GEO 2012-2015 Work Plan Implementation Report
3. Monitoring & Evaluation Lessons Learned 2009-2015
4. Board Considerations and Lessons Learned

Document 12 was Approved.

7.7 GFOI Lessons Learned (Document 13 – for consultation)

Mr Robert Samors, GEO Secretariat, presented the document, noting that the report focused on the transition of the Global Forest Observations Initiative (GFOI) Project Office from GEO to the UN

Food and Agriculture Organization. The Committee discussed how the lessons learned from the GFOI experience would be captured and translated into practice for the transfer of pre-operational initiatives to host organizations in the future. Australia expressed strong interest in learning more about the inception and evolution of GFOI, and lessons learned from that experience, and offered to consult with individuals involved in GFOI's early stages and report back to the Committee. The Committee accepted modifications to the pre-agreed language for the 34th Session Report.

Document 13 was Approved.

Action 34.12 Secretariat to propose to IPWG language to codify best practices/procedures for transfer of pre-operational Initiatives to host organizations (e.g., GFOI→FAO) (31 August 2015).

Action 34.13 Secretariat to invite GFOI partners to provide additional input on lessons learned from early stages of initiative (Immediate (Completed, 22 July 2015) / Response requested by 15 August 2015).

7.8 GEOGLAM Update (Document 14 – for information)

The Executive Committee appreciates and took note of the progress regarding the establishment of the GEOGLAM Advisory Committee. The Executive Committee offered its assistance in encouraging the participation of nominated Advisory Committee members and looks forward to receiving a report on the first meeting of the Advisory Committee at the GEO-XII Plenary and during the 36th Session of the Executive Committee.

Document 14 was Approved.

8 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS

8.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 15 – for information)

The Executive Committee noted the report and expressed its appreciation for the continuing efforts of the Secretariat to carry forward the GEO agenda through the conclusion of GEO's first decade, and dedicated assistance in the preparations and planning for GEO's second decade. The Committee also acknowledged the Secretariat's careful stewardship of GEO's limited resources and welcomed the new additions to the staff.

Italy requested clarification on why particular organizations in prospective Member governments are contacted. The Secretariat explained the Report reflects requests received. The Secretariat responds to all such requests. The European Commission recommended one modification to the travel table, suggesting the headings in the front of the report be grouped differently, and reiterated its request for a staffing plan. The Secretariat noted the staffing plan is being developed in conjunction with the Budget Working Group, based on the anticipated scope of work being developed in the Strategic Plan and 2016 Transitional Work Programme. South Africa requested a copy of the acceptance letter from the Zimbabwe Minister (*copy sent, 13 July 2015*).

Document 15 was Approved, as amended.

8.2 Financial Statements 2014 and Audit Report (Document 16 – for information)

Mr Luckson Ngwira, Chief of Finance Division, and Mr Angiolo Rolli, Director of Resource Management, WMO, presented the 2014 Financial Statement and External Audit Report. Mr Ngwira explained that there had been a small decrease of 0.2 million CHF in the assets of the GEO Trust Fund. This decrease resulted from a deficit of 0.1 million CHF and a further 0.1 million CHF charged to the reserve from long-term liabilities. The Statement also showed an under spending of expenditure against budget, the saving being mainly achieved in salaries and employee benefits, travel and in-kind

expenditure. There is a constraint on expenditure due to a matching of income. As in previous years, there is a difficulty to align expenditure with actual income because of the unpredictable timing and amount of contributions. The majority of the income in 2014 arrived only in December. He concluded by stating that the balance remained in a good position, that it is important to keep the future liabilities under consideration, and to consider increasing the Working Capital Fund.

Mr Rolli presented the External Audit Report. The Audit opinion was again unqualified (i.e., clean) report. The auditors had mentioned the improvements requested and accepted by WMO in the area of procurement. These recommendations centered on the need to update procedures and overhaul Standing Instructions as well as undertaking staff training to be in line with current procurement practice. The supplier database would also be updated on a regular basis. The Secretary General of WMO has accepted these recommendations.

The Executive Committee expressed appreciation for the good working relationship among the Auditors, the GEO Secretariat and WMO Finance.

8.3 Interim Report on Income and Expenditure at 31 May 2015 and Projections 2015 *(Document 17 – for information)*

Mr John Matuszak, United States, presented the document on behalf of the Budget Working Group (BWG). He mentioned that since the issuance of the document, contributions from Australia and Japan have been received. The BWG had considered this document in advance of the Executive Committee meeting and had requested changes to the way the Junior Professional Officer expenditure was characterised, that the expenditure on travel was separated into staff travel and sponsorship of travel of participants from developing countries to GEO Events, and that there was an indication in the Notes section on how the reforecasting of expenditure until the end of the year had been achieved.

The BWG will convene again in September to review the proposed 2016 budget, along with the Staffing Plan. Both the budget and Staffing Plan will be aligned with the 2016 Transitional Work Programme.

8.4 Participating Organizations Moratorium *(Document 18 – for consultation)*

Ms Barbara Ryan, Secretariat Director, presented the document, suggesting that the Executive Committee align expectations regarding Participating Organizations (POs), and proposing that the Executive Committee recommend to Plenary that the moratorium on POs be lifted in November.

The Committee discussed whether GEO should be inclusive or exclusive, noting that GEO's political effectiveness comes from Member governments. There was broad acknowledgement that GEO relies on POs to accomplish much of its agenda and should, therefore, be open to participation. However, more specific criteria should be developed to elicit information on how individual POs intend to contribute to GEO, and the differences between POs and Observers.

Action 34.14 Secretariat to develop draft criteria for evaluation/acceptance of Observers and Participating Organizations *(Draft to be distributed to Executive Committee 14 August 2015 (Completed, 17 August 2015) / Executive Committee comments due 28 August 2015 / Executive Committee teleconference 9 September 2015).*

8.5 Evaluation of Applications for Observer Status *(Document 19 – for consultation)*

The Chair proposed that all applications for Observer status be accepted and that the two applications for PO status be accepted as Observers, until such time as the moratorium is lifted.

Document 19 was Approved.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Dr Susan Barrell, Australia, offered several reflections on the occasion of her final Executive Committee meeting. She noted the vital role the GEO community plays in the success of the organization, specifically citing the importance of showing respect and appreciation to the Participating Organizations and the Secretariat.

10 SUMMARY OF ACTION ITEMS

Action Items are provided at the conclusion of Executive Summary (page 3 of this Report).

CLOSING REMARKS

The Co-Chairs thanked the Committee members and the Secretariat for their contributions to a successful meeting. The Committee thanked Susan Barrell (Australia) and Yoshiaki Kinoshita (Japan) for their dedicated service to GEO.

17:30 Adjourned

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