

Group on Earth Observations – Ministerial Summit

Geneva 17 January 2014

Statement of Georgia

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of Georgia I would like to express our gratitude to the Ministerial Summit, as well as to GEO-X Plenary and the Secretariat, for endorsing Georgia to join the Group on Earth Observation as its 90th Member.

Georgia as part of Caucasian region, is an important ecological and economic corridor between the Black and Caspian Seas and the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountains.

European and Black Sea dimensions are also important drivers of environmental governance in Georgia. Recent decision of December 2013, committing Georgia to implement the European Environmental Agency's Shared Environmental Information System, is the best illustration of current policies of Georgia to facilitate the free and unrestricted access to public sources of data and information.

Another important development of the last year was the establishment at the MoENRP the Environmental Information and Education Centre - single coordination mechanism for data collection, processing and sharing; and cooperating in an integrated manner with other agencies and levels of governance.

In addition, National Environmental Agency of Georgia (NEA) – responsible for observation of hydrological, meteorological, climatic, geological, environmental pollution, etc. – is designated with the function to act as the National GEO Principle, representing Georgia in GEO partnership.

We see the Membership to GEO as the policy development, capacity building and technical support instrument to enhance the opportunities for Georgian citizens to access data and information to the fullest extent possible, meeting thus more comprehensively the requirements of Aarhus Convention on access to environmental information.

We would like to use this opportunity to mention the role of the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme enviroGRIDS Project and its coordinators from the University of Geneva for promoting the GEO/GEOSS framework among the Black Sea basin countries.

It is indeed symbolic for us that the international three-digit country code of Georgia is GEO! Despite being a new member, we are indeed looking forward to benefit from membership to GEO, and be capable to contribute to GEOSS.

Let me therefore conclude by stating that we are endorsing the GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan and its successor. Environment and data sharing do not recognize boundaries and scales. We all need to change paradigms and indeed **Think and Act both Globally and Locally!**

Thank you for your attention,

Nino Sharashidze

First Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Protection of Georgia