

Draft Summary Report

19th Executive Committee Meeting Geneva, 15-16 July 2010

1 GENERAL BUSINESS

The GEO Co-Chair from the European Commission (EC), Ms Manuela Soares, served as Chair for the meeting. She welcomed the delegates and accentuated the busy agenda and many issues that needed to be addressed during this session, particularly preparations for the Ministerial Summit. Noting the excellent work done thus far in GEOSS implementation, she urged that careful thought be given to the new Work Plan in order to achieve full implementation of GEOSS by 2015.

Mr Zhao Datong, representing the GEO Co-Chair from China, said that much progress had been made in GEOSS implementation and that preparations for GEO-VII and the Summit in China were well advanced.

Mr Philemon Mjwara, GEO Co-Chair from South Africa looked forward to discussions on the pivotal and critical issues of the Mid-term Evaluation which poses interesting issues to reflect on and to shape the future Work Plan, and on reaching agreement on the work of the Data Sharing task Force crucial for the success of GEO.

Mr Steve Fetter, representing the GEO Co-Chair from the United States said that this was his first GEO Executive Committee Meeting and that he was impressed at the preparations for the Summit. He noted the well-prepared documentation for the meeting.

1.1 Adoption of Agenda (Document 1)

The Chair asked the participants whether they had any changes to the draft Agenda. The EC felt that documents 7 and 9 needed Action, and that Documents 10 and 12 should be for Acceptance. The title of agenda item 11 should be changed to reflect the title of Document 20. Australia agreed with these changes but felt that care should be taken to avoid any perceptions that the Executive Committee was making decisions on behalf of Plenary. Brazil expressed the view that the agenda was very busy, and the timing of the meeting too short to enable thorough discussions of the many important items. He recommended that future Executive Committee meetings should last at least two full days. This proposition was seconded by Australia. The US wished to have fewer but perhaps longer sessions during the year. It was decided to revisit this idea at the end of the meeting. With these remarks, the Agenda was adopted.

1.2 Approval of Summary Report of the 18th Executive Committee Meeting (Document 2)

After one small editorial correction, the Report was accepted.

1.3 Review of Actions from Previous Meetings (Document 3)

The Secretariat Director reviewed the actions and suggested closing Actions 12.26, 13.7, 18.6, 18.8 and 18.13, in addition to those already indicated as closed in Document 3.

Brazil objected to closing action 13.7 so that GCI population would remain under the scrutiny of the Executive Committee. Australia felt that 9.18 should not be limited to the GEOSS Common Infrastructure, but should be broadened to include further actions from the Monitoring and Evaluation Report to ensure delivery of the whole of GEOSS.

It was decided to follow the recommendation of the Director except for 13.7 Action 9.18 should also not be limited to just the GCI-CT, but should be broadened to involve the entire GEO Community..

Executive Committee also requested that documents be labelled either as “for acceptance”, “for action” or “for information” in future meetings (see Action 18.1).

2 SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS AND TRUST FUND

2.1 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 4)

The Secretariat Director presented the report.

The Chair welcomed the Report and opened the floor for comments. Australia queried whether the Secretariat Director had also taken the opportunity to engage with other Indian agencies, as well as ISRO, and mentioned the importance of engaging small Pacific islands states, most of which are not covered by GEONETCast.

South Africa requested an update at the next session of the Executive Committee on the issue of the Eye on Earth Summit and value added, in light of the Evaluation of the M&E Working Group and the shortcomings of GEO.

Russia requested more information on the IIASA GEO-BENE study. The Director explained that it was not an official GEO survey but work funded by the EU under FP7 and did not need GEO’s endorsement.

Italy acknowledged the impressive amount of work undertaken during the period and asked if the report could be organized on the same lines as the Work Plan Progress Report to harmonize it and enable better comprehension. The Director recalled that the Secretariat’s role was not to implement GEOSS but to support the Committees and Work Plan implementation and undertake other corporate activities and report on those. This explained the structure of the Secretariat reporting under the headings promote, prepare and support which were agreed by the Executive Committee.

The EC confirmed that the Report was presented in this format at the request of the Executive Committee, and closed the item by thanking the Director and acknowledging the excellent work of the Secretariat staff.

Action 19.1 – Secretariat to report on the preparation of the Eye on Earth Summit at the next meeting and circulate the Secretariat’s correspondence with the Organizers to the Executive Committee.

2.2 Report of the External Auditor for 2009 (Document 5)

The Report was presented by Mr Damian Brewitt, Director International Audit of the National Audit Office, UK. He was pleased to confirm an unqualified audit opinion for GEO, and reiterated that GEO’s financial statements revealed no material weaknesses or errors. He highlighted three key items from the report, on financial matters, internal control and the implementation of IPSAS and recommended regular cash flow reporting to manage risks in the future, assurance of internal control through the WMO’s Office of Internal Oversight and the development of a simple risk management process. He said that GEO was well placed to implement IPSAS, and that the IPSAS compliant annual financial statements would provide members with an improved set of statements which would clearly set out the real level of GEO’s assets and liabilities.

The Chair thanked the external auditor, requested the Executive Committee to note the report with satisfaction and appreciation and asked the Secretariat to present it at GEO-VII for acceptance.

2.3 Report on Income and Expenditure, January-June 2010 (Document 6)

The Secretariat Director presented the interim Financial Report for 2010. He noted that the level of contributions to the Trust Fund was the lowest since 2006, and that 2011 may be started with a reduction in working capital below 2 million. The Chair thanked the Director for clearly setting out the budget revision situation.

The US recognized the challenges in a Ministerial year and pledged additional resources in the amount of USD 600,000, to be available in September, bringing its contribution for 2010 to over 1 million USD.

South Africa remarked that its contribution in Swiss Francs was reflected correctly, but that the amount in ZAR should be reported as 1.5 million. Japan announced that its pledge of CHF 404,000 would be transferred shortly. The EC expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for reducing expenditure in line with contributions. It pledged the same amount of €600,000 for 2011, and stated that it would continue to support the travel of developing country participants to GEO official meetings and ensure support for the Ministerial showcases and exhibition. China stated an in-kind contribution of USD 500,000 for hosting GEO-VII, the Summit and related meetings.

The Chair proposed that in light of the increased contributions to the GEO Trust Fund in 2010, revision 2 of the budget proposal (Table 4 of Document 6) be accepted provisionally, with a new budget revision to be prepared in light of the new pledge made at this meeting.

Action 19.2 – Secretariat, to circulate a revised budget proposal for 2010 within two weeks.

3 REPORT OF THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION WORKING GROUP

3.1 GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation (Document 7 – for information)

Mr. Charles Hutchinson, Co-chair of the Evaluation Team, presented the key findings and recommendations from the GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation. As noted in the document, the evaluation was mandated at the time of the First Ministerial Summit of GEO in Cape Town, South Africa, in order to objectively assess GEOSS implementation from the inception of GEO to the present, as well as provide guidance for the future. The Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group (M&E WG) was tasked to complete the evaluation in time for presentation at the Second Ministerial Summit of GEO, slated for November 2010. Key data sources for the evaluation included GEO documents such as the GEOSS Ten-Year Implementation Plan, the Strategic Targets, Work Plans and Task Sheets, Work Plan Progress Reports, and meeting reports from GEO Plenary and Executive Committee sessions as well as from the GEO Committees. Literature external to GEO were also consulted by the Evaluation Team, including professional publications, journals, statements, audits, and other program evaluations relevant to assessment of Work Plan Task activities. Finally, results from opinion surveys on GEOSS implementation distributed by the Evaluation Team (ET) were compiled. Participants included targeted “key informants” (members of the GEO community and Secretariat), “survey respondents” (referring to individuals completing web-accessible online surveys during GEO-related meetings), and “stakeholders” (a combination of key informants, survey respondents and authors of the documents consulted during the evaluation). The GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation resulted in 8 recommendations as a response to 14 key findings.

The Chair proposed opening discussion on the key findings before reviewing systematically each of the 8 recommendations.

Brazil, supported by France, opened the discussion by commenting on key finding number 9 and suggesting that the current GCI was, in fact, fundamentally and irrevocably flawed. It requested that

this statement be explicitly reflected in the management response that will be prepared. It had been assumed that once the GCI were in place, contributions would be forthcoming voluntarily. This has not proven to be the case. In addition, the GCI as it now stands offers no information with respect to quality control, nor can it reflect gap analyses as called for in the 10-Year Implementation Plan. These factors indicate there is a need for a more intelligent approach to construction of the GCI, something which must be implemented as quickly as possible. The Secretariat Director responded by noting that building GEOSS is a very complicated endeavour, something that has never been attempted before. The process necessarily includes trial and error and although there may be some flaws in the GCI, these are not fatal. GEO is trying to create a new path for delivery of systems, and the Secretariat Director believes this is still deliverable with the current GCI.

Australia expressed appreciation for the Evaluation and found that it contained genuine answers to genuine questions, and thus the GEO community would do well to heed its contents to not lose a critical opportunity to make GEO work. Australia further noted there seem to be common themes, such as the perception of benefits coming from GEO not having met all expectations, although this should be balanced by recognizing that GEOSS is only half-way to full implementation. The voluntary nature of GEO should not be such an issue, as long as the appropriate structure and governance is in place, in view of the fact that many intergovernmental organizations depend on voluntary support.

Japan thanked the ET for its work and found the recommendations and findings to be comprehensive, reflecting the complexity of GEO as well as its strengths and limitations. Although it may be tempting to go back and build a GCI from scratch, the essential point of GEOSS is to take advantage of existing systems. Referencing key finding 13, Japan observed that gap analyses, which should be supplied by GEO, are important in planning for satellite missions. Moreover, the hope is that as new approaches are devised to addressing gaps, contributions to GEOSS will be encouraged.

Although the ET was technically independent, Italy observed that its members were provided voluntarily by GEO Member governments. The key findings of the report were not really a surprise to anyone, underscoring the fact that the GEO community is well aware of its own state of affairs. The ET has now provided clear evidence on what isn't working and what needs to be improved. Since findings 1 to 6 were positive, GEO members should focus their attention on findings 7 to 14 where improvements are needed.

As a member of the ADC, Alessandro Annoni pointed out that it is important to make a distinction between the GCI and GEOSS architecture. The former is a part of the latter, and the message is quite clear that the current GEOSS architecture need to be improved. It should be build more in line with the strategic targets – including risk assessment – and the Committees will be expected to play a role in this.

The Chair then directed that discussion be focused on the GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation recommendations themselves.

Recommendation 1:

Given the current framework, Australia questioned what the exact nature of the mandate for GEOSS is beyond 2015. If the consensus is that GEOSS has a lifespan beyond 2015, there needs to be a recommendation to that effect. Brazil agreed by observing it would be hard to imagine that GEOSS would just disappear after 2015, considering the amount of good-will, commitments and in-kind contributions that have already been made.

Recommendation 2:

In response to a question from France, Charles Hutchinson clarified that consideration needs to be given as whether the voluntary nature of GEOSS works or if other models of interaction and governance may be more appropriate.

Recommendation 3:

The proposed adoption of a logic model for measuring achieved objectives was discussed at some length. Australia, France and the EC noted that the strategic targets document already had deliverables and outcomes included, against which GEOSS implementation could be measured. The EC further cautioned that care must be taken not to impose yet another structure when the process to handle implementation assessment exists. South Africa added that the M&E WG is already using the strategic targets outcomes as a benchmark in its assessments. Brazil was in favour of striking the final sentence of this recommendation with respect to adoption of a logic model for performance measurement. Italy underlined that the recommendations of the ET could be discussed, accepted or not, but could not be deleted. However, a “logical model” is usually adopted when proposing key elements of a project/programme with hierarchy of objectives, key external factors critical to the success of the project/programme, and how its achievement would be monitored and evaluated with specific indicators and sources of verification. This logical model is set up before a project/programme is approved, which was not the case of the GEO WPs. The approach could nevertheless be useful to inject some degree of discipline in the GEO voluntary contributions, which often follow a logic of their own, particularly when setting up future activities.

Recommendation 4:

Australia emphasized the beginning of the recommendation, that GEO clearly make known the role it plays in guiding GEOSS implementation. France highlighted the importance of final point of the recommendation, that GEO facilitate information exchange as opposed to being an information broker.

Recommendation 5: No comments.

Recommendation 6: No comments.

Recommendation 7:

France observed that the Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) used to perform systematic gap analyses, but that a transparent mechanism for this was absent from the current GEO Work Plan. On the other hand, Italy noted that a comprehensive gap analysis focusing on user requirements in each of the SBAs – identified as crucial – was far from being completed. The nature of this type of analysis is costly and work-intensive since targets and user needs can easily shift. Italy further cautioned that GEO must avoid being overly ambitious in this respect, as the gap analysis process could prove endless. The United States commented that, as noted in the evaluation report, there were really two types of analyses: one on gaps in GEOSS implementation, and the other with respect to Earth observing system requirements and data. On this latter point, close cooperation between the STC and M&E WG regarding the Earth Observation Capacity Assessment (EOCA) proposal was encouraged. Brazil suggested there must be middle ground that GEOSS can strike. For example, satellite communities have been performing gap analyses through CEOS. The significant, ongoing gap analysis work among space and other agencies should figure more prominently in the Work Plan. Australia added that it would be advantageous to draw on the extensive work already done by both CEOS and GCOS. Structural gap analysis is also critical, as it can provide the overarching framework and observational requirements that will help guide the application of resources. The Secretariat Director pointed out that the term “comprehensive” was perhaps too blunt and should be dropped from the recommendation, since many smaller analyses are performed on a daily basis, which have led to concrete actions. Australia summed up by noting that the point of this recommendation is to try to identify a systematic cross-GEOSS analysis mechanism, in order to obtain some idea of where to put investments, efforts, and priorities.

Recommendation 8:

Brazil remarked on the importance of this recommendation because the current GEO data policy fails to deal with intellectual property rights: having full and open access to data does not make that data

public property. France concurred by noting that the rights of data producers must be recognized, otherwise it will be difficult to encourage data contributions to GEOSS.

In conclusion, the Chair stated that it was the view of the Executive Committee that the recommendations contained in the GEOSS Mid-Term Evaluation should be addressed by GEO at the highest level. This would include: a) reference within the 2010 Ministerial Summit Declaration, in particular in the “future section;” b) the 2012-2015 GEO Work Plan drafting process; c) the ongoing work of the M&E WG, asking the M&E WG to assess the current Strategic Targets within the context of a logic model; and d) that there should be a single coherent gap analysis undertaken within the context of GEOSS implementation. South Africa volunteered to take the lead in preparing a draft managerial response, outlining how the recommendations will be implemented. The response will be submitted together with the GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation to the Ministers in Beijing. The Chair thanked South Africa for agreeing to prepare an initial draft of this document.

Action 19.3 – The Chair asked South Africa to circulate an initial draft of the managerial response to the GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation to the Members of the Executive Committee by 15 August.

Action 19.4 – Members of the Executive Committee to send comments on the draft managerial response to South Africa by 6 September.

Action 19.5 – Based upon comments received, South Africa, together with the other Co-chairs, to prepare the final draft of the managerial response from the Executive Committee to the GEOSS Mid-Term Evaluation report for submission to the GEO-VII Plenary.

3.2 Preparations for 2011 GEOSS Evaluation (Document 8 – for information)

Mr. Charles Baker, Co-Chair of the M&E WG, presented the revised 2010 timeline for preparations and execution of the 2011 GEOSS Evaluation, noting that the M&E WG had been working on the definition of GEOSS performance indicators since January 2010, to be used in conjunction with the Strategic Targets for an initial assessment of the Architecture and Data Management transverse areas. Additionally, the M&E WG Co-chairs had expressed concern at decreasing participation in M&E WG activities and thus a new call for M&E Membership was requested.

Brazil questioned whether focussing on an assessment of the Architecture and Data Management transverse areas was truly targeting an evaluation of GEOSS itself. Brazil recommended broadening participation in the Evaluation team to expertise with certain skills, such as information technology (IT), necessary for evaluation of GEOSS from a critical point of view. Additionally, Brazil would like to see funds set aside to invite experts from both developed and developing nations to participate in the evaluation. In response, Charles Baker noted that the Architecture and Data Management transverse areas had been chosen for initial evaluation since these seemed of great importance at the GEO-IV Plenary and Ministerial Summit in Cape Town. He also agreed that an evaluation of the complex architecture structure could require experts, as well as judicious use of the rich IT literature on the subject.

Australia support the revised schedule, recognizing the original one was too ambitious, and noted that it was difficult for Australia to participate in the evaluation team, given the huge distances to travel. Perhaps increased flexibility in terms of meeting possibilities (videoconferencing, teleconferences) would enhance participation.

The Chair summarized by stating the Executive Committee was in favor of the proposed timeline for the 2011 GEOSS Evaluation, with the exception of providing travel assistance for participation in the Evaluation Team.

4 REPORT OF THE DATA SHARING TASK FORCE (DOCUMENT 9 – FOR INFORMATION)

Mr. Alan Edwards, co-Chair of the Data Sharing Task Force (DTSF), presented the draft Data Sharing Action Plan (DSAP). The presentation included why data should be shared fully and openly, and the current status of GEOSS data sharing. It presented a vision of where GEOSS wants to be and by when, as well as benefits and barriers to implementing the vision. The Plan recommends eight Actions be undertaken to implement the Data Sharing Principles (DSP) and to enable the development of working procedures for data sharing within GEOSS. The set of Actions are directed toward GEO (Actions 1-4), to GEO Members (Actions 5 and 6), and to GEO Members and Participating Organizations (Actions 7 and 8).

Russia asked if the data sharing principles are a separate document and Mr. Edwards replied that they are a section of the 10-year Implementation Plan and since each new member must agree to the 10-year plan, they implicitly agree to the DSP. Russia asked if there was a supporting document elsewhere; otherwise, this DSAP seems to stand alone. The GEO Secretariat said that the best document to do that is the Implementation Guidelines for the GEOSS Data Sharing principles, which was accepted by GEO Plenary VI.

Brazil asked about Action 1, the creation of the GEOSS Data Collection of Open Resources for Everyone (GEOSS Data-CORE), whether this would be a separate structure within the Portal. Mr. Edwards answered that it is not intended to be a separate structure, but could be “highlighted content” within the GCI, in particular via the homepage of the GEO Web Portal. Brazil reiterated its concern about Action 3, maintaining the GCI, as the architectural framework essential to implementing the DSP. It believed that more options about data licensing should be investigated, such as Creative Commons. Mr. Edwards responded that this has been investigated and many on the Committee have concerns because Creative Commons is more for creative/intellectual rights. He also stated that there are other licensing approaches that are being considered. Brazil again stated that the intellectual property rights should be guaranteed and the Executive Committee needs to propose alternatives.

Australia queried whether consideration had been given to the impact of anti-counterfeiting policies, similar to anti-pirating rules, which make Internet Service Providers liable for inappropriate content. They warn that such a policy could affect GEO (e.g., infringing on copyright).

The United States said that it fully supports the DSAP, but is concerned about the request for Ministers to adopt it and recommend that the Plenary do so instead, with endorsement by the Ministers. Mr. Edwards said that the action the DSTF is responding to is for the DSAP to go to the Ministerial. The Chair says this should be considered as an issue when agenda is made.

The Chair drew the discussion to a close by requesting the Secretariat on behalf of the Executive Committee to circulate the DSAP and supporting documents to GEO Principals for official government review, before preparing a revision of the document for submission to GEO-VII Plenary.

Action 19.6 – Secretariat to circulate Data Sharing Action Plan to GEO Principals immediately, with comments returned to the Secretariat by 27 August 2010.

Action 19.7 – Data Sharing Task Force, with the assistance of the Secretariat, to draft the revision of the Data Sharing Action Plan based on comments received, for submission to GEO-VII Plenary.

5 PREPARATION OF GEO-VII

5.1 GEO-VII Agenda

After discussion, a number of amendments were proposed to the Draft GEO-VII Agenda, including allocating more time for discussion of the Beijing Declaration. A revised Agenda was presented to the

Executive Committee (Document 10 Rev. 1) and it was agreed that this would now go forward as the Draft Agenda for the GEO-VII plenary.

6 PREPARATIONS OF THE 2010 MINISTERIAL SUMMIT

6.1 Report of the GEO Ministerial Task Force (Document 11 – for information)

Mr. Gilles Ollier, Co-chair of the Ministerial Task Force, presented the report. Several highlights include: Chinese Minister Wan Gang intends to send personal invitations to GEO Member government Ministers with input from the Ministerial Task Force (MTF); the proposed Ministerial Summit Theme is “Observe. Network. Inform.”; the draft Ministerial Declaration has been distributed to GEO Principals for comment through mid-August 2010; and the six selected showcases are Capacity building, Asian regional activities, Disasters, Health, GEO BON, and Carbon.

China confirmed that the second invitation letter to GEO Member government Ministers will be released at end of July, 2010.

6.2 Summit Agenda (Document 12 – for information)

There was some discussion surrounding the choice of theme for the Ministerial Summit. Although acceptable in current form, South Korea proposed to have a more elaborate message, as expressed in previous titles. Australia questioned how the theme was meant to be conveyed, as it was not reflected elsewhere in Ministerial documents. Both Brazil and Australia would prefer replacing the term “Network” by “Share” in the Ministerial theme, to tie in with the Data Sharing Action Plan and, more generally, convey a broader sense of cooperation within GEO. China commented that “Share” may be more challenging to translate. The Secretariat Director observed that “Share” had, indeed, been considered as an option, as well as the gerund form of the verbs. In response to Australia’s query he explained that the 3 Ministerial themes would be used to structure the “coffee-table” book in preparation, as well as to organize the Exhibition.

The EC favours, and is willing to produce, a video to accompany the introductory remarks. The Director recommended that the showcase videos should be no more than 3 minutes in length, a view shared by the United States and Australia.

In summary, speaking on behalf of the Executive Committee, the Chair noted that both the 2005 and 2007 GEO Ministerial Declarations require both the GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation and the DSAP to be addressed at the 2010 GEO Ministerial Summit. The Executive Committee therefore recommends the following:

- 1) Agenda item 2 should be a Keynote Address, delivered by an eminent person, with a focus, although not an exclusive focus, on the Key Findings and Recommendations of the Mid-Term Assessment Report.. The short introductory video should be articulated with in the Keynote Address as appropriate.
- 2) Agenda item 4 should focus on the presentation of the GEOSS Data Sharing Action Plan to the Ministers.
- 3) Agenda items 5, 6 and 7 should be adjusted to show (by order of importance)
 - i. statements by Ministers, with an extended time for such statements;
 - ii. statements by GEO Members represented at the Summit at a level below that of a Minister;
 - iii. statements by Participating Organizations.
- 4) All videos should be kept short and certainly no more than 3 minutes, possibly linked to each of the elements of the Summit Theme.

- 5) With regard to the Summit Theme, the Chair asked China if it could support the proposal to revise the Theme to be “Observing, Sharing, Informing”, or “Observe, Share, Inform”.

The Chair asked that the GEO Secretariat take note of these comments from the Executive Committee and work with China to consider updating the Summit agenda accordingly, seeking the assistance of the MTF.

6.3 Draft Beijing Declaration (Document 13 – for information)

The Executive Committee discussed the current draft Declaration, and members had a number of comments centred on the observation that the Declaration needed strengthening. Considering that the draft declaration has now been sent officially to all GEO principals with a **14 August deadline** for comments, and that the revision of the current draft will be based on those comments, the comments provided by the Executive Committee members will be communicated through the official consultation of the GEO principals and therefore taken into account when the text of the declaration is revised in September.

In general the Executive Committee felt that the text of the Declaration in its current state was not appealing enough for the Ministers, but rather should be more ambitious and specific. At the same time, this suggestion for more ambition and focus was contradicted to a certain degree by other Executive Committee members who questioned the choice made in the current declaration to highlight certain SBAs.

The Executive Committee Co-chairs suggested that the declaration could be "strengthened" by including direct references to the results (recommendations) of the GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation and certain of the actions in the DSAP into the Declaration, possibly under section 3, "The Future". The Declaration could, for example, welcome the report and in a number of sub-bullets go on to make statements linked to the recommendations. Something similar could be done for the DSAP.

Thus, the Declaration could state, for example, that it "Notes with great satisfaction the Data Sharing Action Plan accepted by the GEO-VII Plenary which responds to the request from the Cape Town Summit for a" and then go on to sub-bullets such as:

- 1) Create the GEOSS Data Collection of Open Resources for Everyone;
- 2) Maximise the number of documented datasets made available on the basis of full and open access;
- 3) Take leadership to establish national coordinating mechanisms to promote and monitor engagement with the implementation of the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles;
- 4) Develop flexible policy frameworks to ensure that a more open data environment is implemented;
- 5) Maintain the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI) as the architectural framework essential to implementing the Data Sharing Principles.

It was noted that not *all* actions presented in the full DSAP would be included in the Declaration (e.g. the creation of a new Task Force, if agreed, would be established through Plenary acceptance of the full DSAP and supporting documents). In this way, the *negotiations* on the GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation and the DSAP would be fully folded into the Declaration, while *key actions* for GEO Members would be formally adopted by GEO Members as a part of the Declaration. However, the complete text of both documents would not have to be "negotiated;" only the much shorter texts in the Declaration itself. Such statements would also strengthen the Declaration, providing substantial "Ministerial" content.

6.4 GEO Mid-term Report on Progress (Document 14 – for information)

Michael Williams introduced the document.

The Secretariat Director noted that this document was requested by the MTF, similar to the one produced for the 2007 Ministerial Summit. The current effort contains more substantive text and includes one-page summaries of overarching tasks within the GEO 2007-2009 Work Plan.

Brazil, supported by the United States, commented that the document needed more examples of how GEO has addressed the needs of developing nations. Emphasis should be placed on what has happened and what structures are yet needed to be put in place.

In response to a procedural question by the United States regarding proper channels for comment, the European Commission noted that this document did not form part of the negotiated documents but was for information purposes. Therefore, comments could be directed to the MTF.

The Chair concluded by stating that the recommendation of the Executive Committee regarding the Report on Progress was that it should be submitted to the GEO Principals for comments and remarks when ready. However, the Report should not form a part of the officially negotiated Summit documents but rather be given to Ministers for information. Further, the Report on Progress should not be presented as an agenda item during the actual Ministerial Summit.

6.5 Publications and Exhibition

The Chair noted this had been discussed adequately under agenda item 6.1.

7 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GCI COORDINATION TEAM ON THE SELECTION OF THE GEO PORTAL AND CLEARINGHOUSE PROVIDERS. (DOCUMENT 15 – FOR ACCEPTANCE)

Mr Alan Edwards, Chair of the GCI Coordination Team (GCI-CT), presented the findings and recommendations of the GCI-CT with respect to the process for selection of a single GEO Web Portal and single GEOSS Clearinghouse provider. The process, building upon the experiences of the GCI Initial Operating Capability (IOC), was set in motion by the GCI-CT in February 2010 upon request by the GEO-VI Plenary, and was tasked to provide the results by May 2010. Based upon its work, the GCI-CT therefore recommended that:

- US Geological Survey (USGS) be accepted as the single GEOSS Common Infrastructure Clearinghouse Component Provider;
- European Space Agency (ESA) / UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) be accepted as the single GEOSS Common Infrastructure GEO Web Portal Component Provider.

Alan Edwards also noted that he is stepping down as Chair of the GCI-CT, and Mr. Elliot Christian (WMO) will be replacing him.

Upon request by Alan Edwards for clarification on who has the actual authority to effectuate the selection, the Secretariat Director noted that the GCI-CT mandate, approved by the GEO-VI Plenary, includes execution.

Alan Edwards expressed the wish for endorsement by the Executive Committee of the GCI-CT work, which Brazil supported by noting the excellent criteria used in the selection process. Australia, supported by Italy, seconded the recommendation of endorsement by the Executive Committee, and noted that the decision did not need ratification by Plenary but should be presented for information.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Chair thanked the GCI-CT, INPE (Brazil), the JRC (European Commission) and the EPA (United States) for their efforts in supporting the testing carried out within the selection process. The Chair also thanked all of the GCI Component Providers for their contribution to the development of the GCI. The Chair then asked the GEO Secretariat take note that the Executive Committee endorsed the Recommendations of the GCI-CT, and to transmit the results

of the selection process to the various GCI Component Providers that had taken part in the selection process as soon as possible.

Action 19.8 – Secretariat to inform all GCI Component Providers of the results of the GCI-CT selection process.

Action 19.9 – Secretariat to present results of GCI-CT selection process to GEO-VII Plenary, for information.

8 REPORT ON THE GEO WORK PLAN

8.1 Report on 2009-2011 Work Plan Progress Report (Document 16 – for acceptance)

Ms Alexia Massacand of the Secretariat presented the document. The Report describes how the GEO 2009-2011 Work Plan has advanced the GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan since the GEO-VI Plenary meeting. It provides an overall summary of the progress made in each cross-cutting and Societal Benefit Area, and highlights key outputs and activities to illustrate how this progress was achieved.

The Chair thanked the GEO Secretariat and South Africa for their hard work on preparing and hosting the 2010 Work Plan Symposium and for the comprehensive report on the Symposium.

Australia wanted to draw attention to the analysis by the Science and Technology Committee that demonstrates how the Work Plan reporting is too positive. By not emphasizing negatives, there may be missed opportunities for improvement. Italy agreed with Australia and asked for suggestions from the Secretariat on how to improve the situation. The European Commission concurred that the reporting was generally too positive. Brazil recommended the progress table be more complex, using more than 3 colours to highlight nuances of progress. Brazil also thanked South Africa for their hosting of the Work Plan Symposium.

Italy asked about specific problems and possible solutions. Ms. Massacand said that most of the issues are related to a lack of reporting, some are in regard to funding, and others have a leadership void. The GEO Secretariat Director tried to illustrate the variety of problems with the example of the Disaster SBA. Regarding tsunami early warning, even though great progress is being made, no report is provided by the Task participants. Others are due to changing policy environment. The Director suggested that GEO Secretariat produces a document using the same 3 colors, or possibly another mechanism, that expressed the degree of progress towards meeting the strategic targets.

Australia said that positive reporting may be a result of the reporting process, which tends to favor only positive reporting. Italy proposed that reporting should be reduced and supporting actions should be improved and suggested that the GEO Secretariat should consider reporting on actions taken by the GEO Secretariat to help activate tasks.

Brazil stated that there is need to highlight those countries and organizations that are contributing to GEOSS. This could be a way of both rewarding the contributors and putting pressure on those who are not. Brazil asked whether some of the potential providers (e.g., in the tsunami task) are reluctant to provide information because of a lack of credit, proper recognition, etc. The GEO Secretariat Director replied that the task objective is the establishment and operation of the network. Hence, ownership of data, is not an obstacle to reporting.

The Chair proposed that the Executive Committee accept the 2009-2011 Work Plan Progress Report and asked the GEO Secretariat to provide a prototype of a reporting document based on strategic targets. Such a report would be very informative when looking to develop the tools GEO will need to implement the 2010-2015 Work Plan.

Action 19.10 – Secretariat to develop a prototype report that would assess progress in the Work Plan tasks measured against the Strategic Targets.

8.2 Preparation for 2012 – 2015 Work Plan (Document 17 – for information)

Ms. Massacand also presented the preparations for the 2012-2015 Work Plan, which will be submitted to GEO-VII Plenary for information. The European Commission commented that the timing makes sense. South Africa suggested it would be useful to have a preamble that deals with managing expectations, what GEO can and cannot do, through reference to the Strategic Targets.

Australia spoke about the need for gap analysis as referred to in the GEOSS Mid-term Evaluation. Addressing these gaps should be considered as part of the next Work Plan, from an integrated, overarching perspective. As GEOSS is a system of systems, so the Work Plan should have a more holistic view. The GEO Secretariat Director responded by asking the Executive Committee to allow the Secretariat to first deliver a prototype report linked with the Strategic Targets, before responding to individual concerns.

South Africa noted that coordination of the process would be similar to its assignment on aligning tasks with targets, and thereby volunteered to work with the GEO Secretariat as needed.

Ms. Massacand noted the next Work Plan Symposium will be in May, 2011, but exact dates and venue are not yet known.

9 REPORT OF THE COMMITTEES (DOCUMENT 18 – FOR INFORMATION)

Mr. Alessandro Annoni, Co-chair of the ADC, presented the reports from the four GEO Committees.

The United States noted its appreciation and support to the ADC's plans to explore the longer-term future of data management in GEOSS, which involves the evolution of the clearinghouse, the development and deployment of standardized application programming interfaces, and the promotion of access to Earth observation data and their descriptions through internationally recognized online services and protocols.

With respect to a question for clarification from the Executive Committee by the STC on Committee membership and participation, especially with regard to "independent experts," Brazil expressed the view that in reality there were no independent experts since all Committee participants needed to be affiliated to GEO in some manner, as stated in the Rules of Procedure. Australia remarked that there were inconsistencies, since agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO) were not a Participating Organization in GEO, yet were allowed to be Task Leads. Moreover, it was not clear from the Rules of Procedure whether an agency can contribute as such, and not as a GEO Member. As an example, universities may not perceive a close association with Member governments and thus prefer to be recognized independently. In response, the Secretariat Director stated that this was not in line with the Rules of Procedure, and in this sense supported Brazil's contention that, within GEO, there are no independent experts: they all contribute through their Member government or Participating Organization. The United States agreed, noting that Task participants must be invited by a representative of a GEO Member or Participating Organization to be able to participate in GEO Tasks or on GEO Committees. With respect to universities and research institutions, the Work Plan and task sheet reporting mechanisms need to reflect traceability, whereby which GEO Member or Participating Organization inviting the institution in question can be identified.

Otherwise, on behalf of the Executive Committee, the Chair noted that the reporting from the Committees was in accordance with the Reporting Guidelines. She also noted that the Executive Committee appreciated the Recommendations and Request from the GEO Committees, noting that nearly all of these had been addressed under other agenda items.

Mr. Stuart Minchin, Co-chair of the STC, presented the Earth Observation Capacity Assessment (EOCA) proposal. He noted that the GEOSS Implementation Strategy has committed GEO to perform a gap analysis. One is structural (what has been set in motion), another is observational (what remains to be done in terms of planning observation systems). The reason this proposal came from the STC is

that such an undertaking needs the gravitas of a scientific report, something that Ministers will trust. The process could even be peer-reviewed with a literature review and inputs from the GEO community.

The United States commented it was encouraging to learn that EOCA was not attempting to duplicate M&E WG functions. Nevertheless, the United States requested the Executive Committee to instruct STC to work closely with M&E WG if this proposal were to proceed further. Additionally, some understanding of resources involved would be welcome. Brazil noted the proposal should reference CEOS and the work that has been done with respect to observation gaps. Moreover, given that much work of GEO has to do with satellite missions, the lengthy timelines needed for decisions to converge need to be taken into consideration.

The Secretariat Director found the proposal interesting, but cautioned that there were two concerns: timing and methodology. Timing, in that CEOS, IGOS and others have already done these analyses, and it is up to GEO to show how it is assembling the existing pieces to bring added value. It is too early to evaluate how GEO has responded to these existing gap analyses. Moreover, given the current financial climate there may not be much enthusiasm to support “new requirements” before the old ones were met. Methodology, in that GEO should be user-driven with regards requirements; thus scientists and technology experts would perhaps not be the most appropriate to drive this assessment. The European Commission and Italy agreed, noting that it was not entirely clear what type of gap analysis was being proposed. Any plan brought before Ministers should be clear what the gaps are, and how to identify what observations are essential in order to meet user needs.

Stuart Minchin responded by recognizing there were potential issues with the methodology, but the main point here was to simply bring the proposal before the GEO community. The STC is open to guidance about timing, process, and so forth, but would like endorsement from the Executive Committee to proceed with designing a process to carry the proposal forward.

With regard to the EOCA proposal, the Chair concluded that this should be further articulated within the framework of an overall GEOSS gap analysis strategy. The Chair therefore asked the STC, the M&E WG, the Secretariat, and other interested members of the GEO Community, to draft an initial outline of a process that would eventually lead to a coherent overall mechanism being put in place for required gap analyses.

Action 19.11 – The STC, the M&E WG, the Secretariat, and other interested members of the GEO Community to draft an initial outline of a process that can eventually lead to a coherent overall mechanism being put in place for required GEO/GEOSS gap analyses

10 ARTICULATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SECRETARIAT AND COMMITTEES

The Secretariat Director reviewed the highlights of the report, and recommended that the Rules of Procedures do not need to be changed. In addition, to enable higher-level of Secretariat-Committees interaction, his recommendation would be a reduction of Committee administrative activity to the extent possible and, in particular, the number of teleconferences.

The Chair accepted the report on behalf of the Executive Committee and declared the action closed.

11 PROCESS FOR APPOINTING THE SECRETARIAT DIRECTOR FOR THE PERIOD 2012 TO 2014 (DOCUMENT 20)

The European Commission presented the document noting that, in accordance with the GEO Rules of Procedure, Annex E, the position of Director for 2012-2014 should be open to competition; the selection process would need to be completed by the end of June 2011, and GEO-VII would be asked to endorse the process.

The US thanked the EC for its work on this document and suggested that the timeline for the process be adjusted, a grammatical error in the Rules of Procedure be corrected, and criteria for the selection of the Director be included in point 2 of the document.

The issue of conflict of interest for panel members was raised by the EC. Italy asked whether there was any provision for a trial period. It was further noted that the WMO appointment procedure would be followed, and that vacancy announcement should be widely circulated.

The EC and the US offered to prepare an updated version of the document taking into account the observations made by the Executive Committee. This document would then be sent to the Members of the Executive Committee for comment in advance of submission to GEO-VII for endorsement.

Action 19.12 – EC and US to update Document 20 for Executive Committee comment prior to circulation as a GEO-VII document.

12 OPTIONS FOR CREATING A NEW CATEGORY OF ORGANIZATIONS (DOCUMENT 21)

The EC introduced the document outlining the three options and invited comments.

Australia expressed concerns about the mix of organizations under the Participating Organizations label feeling that the relationship of GEO to intergovernmental organizations and their value to GEO was appropriately represented.

Italy was against introducing additional categories in order to avoid bureaucratic complications.

China opposed creating a junior level category of organizations as laid out in option 3. China felt that intergovernmental organizations were important but that the focus needed to remain on member countries which vote in plenary. China preferred Option 1.

Korea supported China in opposing option 3.

The Secretariat Director reminded the Executive Committee that a second category of organizations had been created by recognizing “Observer Organizations”.

The EC opposed option 2 and Italy opposed both options 2 and 3.

The Chair closed the discussion concluding that in the absence of consensus on the proposed options, the current *status quo* should be retained.

13 ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN GEOSS (DOCUMENT 22)

The US believed that this was an important area for discussion and volunteered to draft a paper with guidelines for the next meeting of the Executive Committee, with a view to finalising the document at the 21st session. Brazil, the EC, Italy, South Africa and the GEO Secretariat offered to assist the US in drafting the updated document.

Action 19.13 – The US, with Brazil, the EC, Italy, South Africa and the GEO Secretariat to draft a new document “Engaging the Private sector in GEOSS” for the 20th meeting, the document to be finalised at the 21st session.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

South Africa mentioned that it had observer status in the OECD and that it participated in a forum which examined the governance of science and technology in relation to global challenges. The Executive Committee expressed its willingness to participate in the case studies.

The US reiterated its call for fewer sessions of the Executive Committee and agreed to draft a paper on this subject.

Australia addressed the future role of governance of GEOSS and proposed that the GEO Executive Committee draft Terms of Reference for a GEO Task Force, which would be established by the GEO-VIII Plenary in 2011, GEO-VII establish a Task Force to develop Terms of Reference. The report and recommendations of this group would to be prepared in 2012 and presented to Ministers in 2013.

Japan announced that it would be hosting a Ministerial Meeting on Forest Conservation and Climate Change (REDD + Partnership) on the occasion of the 10th session of the UNCBD in Nagoya in October 2010 and hoped that GEOSS would be represented at this meeting.

South Africa thanked the members for their inputs to this meeting, looked forward to the plenary and Summit in Beijing and extended an offer of support and help to China for the preparation of the Ministerial should it be needed.

The US thanked the Co Chairs, Members and Secretariat for the unique process of GEO and its work.

China acknowledged the valuable discussions, in particular for planning the plenary and summit and looked forward to welcoming everyone to Beijing.

The EC adjourned the meeting by thanking the fellow Co-Chairs and participants, and acknowledged the excellent work of the Secretariat throughout the year. The Summit would be an important milestone in the achievements of GEO, and we could confidently move forward towards Beijing with high expectations and spirits, welcoming the opportunity to present the work to our Ministers and look forward to their feedback.

Action 19.14 – The US to draft a paper on the schedule for future meetings of the Executive committee