



GROUP ON
EARTH OBSERVATIONS

GEO-VI

17-18 November 2009

Report of the Executive Committee

Document 15

As accepted at GEO-VI

Report of the Executive Committee to Plenary

(To completed at the 17th meeting of the Executive Committee meeting immediately prior to GEO-VI in order to include the decisions taken at that meeting.)

1 INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the decisions taken at the 15th meeting of the Executive Committee, held in Geneva on 1 – 2 June 2009, the 16th meeting, held in Geneva on 21 – 22 September, and the 17th meeting, held in Washington DC on 16 November, immediately prior to GEO-VI. The approved minutes of individual Executive Committee meetings can be found on the GEO website.

2 THE 15TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The meeting was chaired by the GEO Co-Chair from the European Commission (EC).

The Executive Committee endorsed a number of recommendations of the Informal Finance Review Team, including the need to ensure a stable budgeting process, to achieve cash contributions to the Trust Fund of at least CHF 3.5 million and ideally CHF 4.5 million (with additional in-kind contributions valued at around CHF 2.0 million), and to invite all GEO members to contribute. At the same time, the Committee noted the importance of promoting GEOSS success stories at the annual Plenary, the 2010 Ministerial Summit, and other key events, such as meetings of the G8 and the G20. External funding sources should be explored, but with care.

The Committee agreed that it will be necessary to transition to the IPSAS accruals-based accounting system. It requested the Secretariat to prepare a report to the Plenary on this transition.

The Committee provided guidance to the ongoing work of the Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group, the Target Task Team (T3) and the Data Sharing Task Force. Noting that the original mandate of the GEOSS Common Infrastructure Initial Operating Capacity (GCI/IOC) Task Force was expiring, the Committee decided to extend the mandate so that the Task Force could present its "Recommendations for Long-term GEOSS Common Infrastructure Operations" to the Committee's September meeting.

The Committee agreed that the Co-Chairs Coordination Committee (C4) should remain a light and informal information-sharing mechanism and should avoid duplicating the mandates of other GEO bodies. It decided to consider the C4's terms of reference at its next meeting.

The Committee accepted the schedule for the Work Plan update, including technical and official reviews. It decided to revisit the issue of how Participating Organizations can best contribute to GEOSS at its next meeting.

Responding to a mandate from the GEO-V Plenary, the Executive Committee decided that the best way to present the issue of the possible expansion of the Executive Committee's membership to GEO-VI may be to recommend two options together with an explanation of the other options.

The Committee decided to set up a dedicated Task Force to prepare the 2010 Ministerial Summit and to ask the Secretariat to invite governments to provide representatives for this effort. China and Korea stated that discussions about their respective offers to host the 2010 Ministerial were continuing and a conclusion would be announced shortly.

3 THE 16TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

The GEO Co-Chair from China chaired the meeting.

The meeting was informed of the pending departure of seconded experts from South Africa and the US and of one contractor, which would bring the number of Secretariat staff down to 18. China has decided to extend the secondment of the Chinese expert until end-2010. South Africa stated that it expected to be able to second a new expert following the departure of the current incumbent. Korea announced its intention to provide a new seconded expert in 2010.

The Committee reviewed the report on income and expenditures for 2009 and noted that the expected annual income of CHF 3.3 million for 2009 was below the agreed minimum threshold of CHF 3.5 million, and well below the optimum level of CHF 4.5 million. In addition, end-of-year projections indicate an opening balance for 2010 of CHF 1.7 million, which is lower than the CHF 2 million that had been agreed as working capital needs for Secretariat operations. This is a sign that the savings accumulated over the past several years are at risk of being run down.

The Committee welcomed the recommendations of the Informal Finance Review Team that Members be encouraged to commit to a regular contribution, to increase their present level of contribution, and to make their pledges early. Members should also be reminded of the financial situation a few months before each Plenary meeting. The Committee agreed that the mandate of the Informal Finance Review Team should expire after it delivered its report to GEO-VI.

The Committee provided guidance to the Target Task Team (T3), the GEOSS Common Infrastructure Initial Operating Capacity (GCI/IOC) Task Force and the Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group. It accepted the Working Group's recommendation that the Secretariat write to Principals inviting nominations to a new evaluation team before the GEO-VI Plenary so that the team can be in place quickly. It also endorsed the Group's draft document, draft summary plan and strategy for recruiting members of the evaluation team.

The Committee asked the Secretariat to designate mentors for the Societal Benefit Area (SBA) Overarching Tasks and to draft the "letter of acknowledgement" referred to in the Guide to Work Plan Management that is annexed to the Work Plan; this letter is to be sent to Task leaders.

The meeting endorsed the Terms of Reference of the Data Sharing Task Force and requested the Task Force to draft a document for GEO-VI.

The Committee agreed that the Committees should report to the Executive Committee in a way that is useful without imposing a heavy reporting burden. It decided to consider this issue further at the 17th meeting of the Executive Committee.

On the issue of Executive Committee membership, the Committee decided to proceed by recommending one particular option to the Plenary, while noting that there was not a full consensus, and explaining what are the other available options.

The Committee agreed that the involvement of the private sector in GEOSS was important and invited the Secretariat to continue working on this issue and to present a new paper to the Committee's 18th meeting.

The Committee noted that a 2010 Ministerial Summit Task Force had been established with 19 members nominated so far. It decided that a document based on the Task Force's upcoming October discussions should be presented to the Plenary.

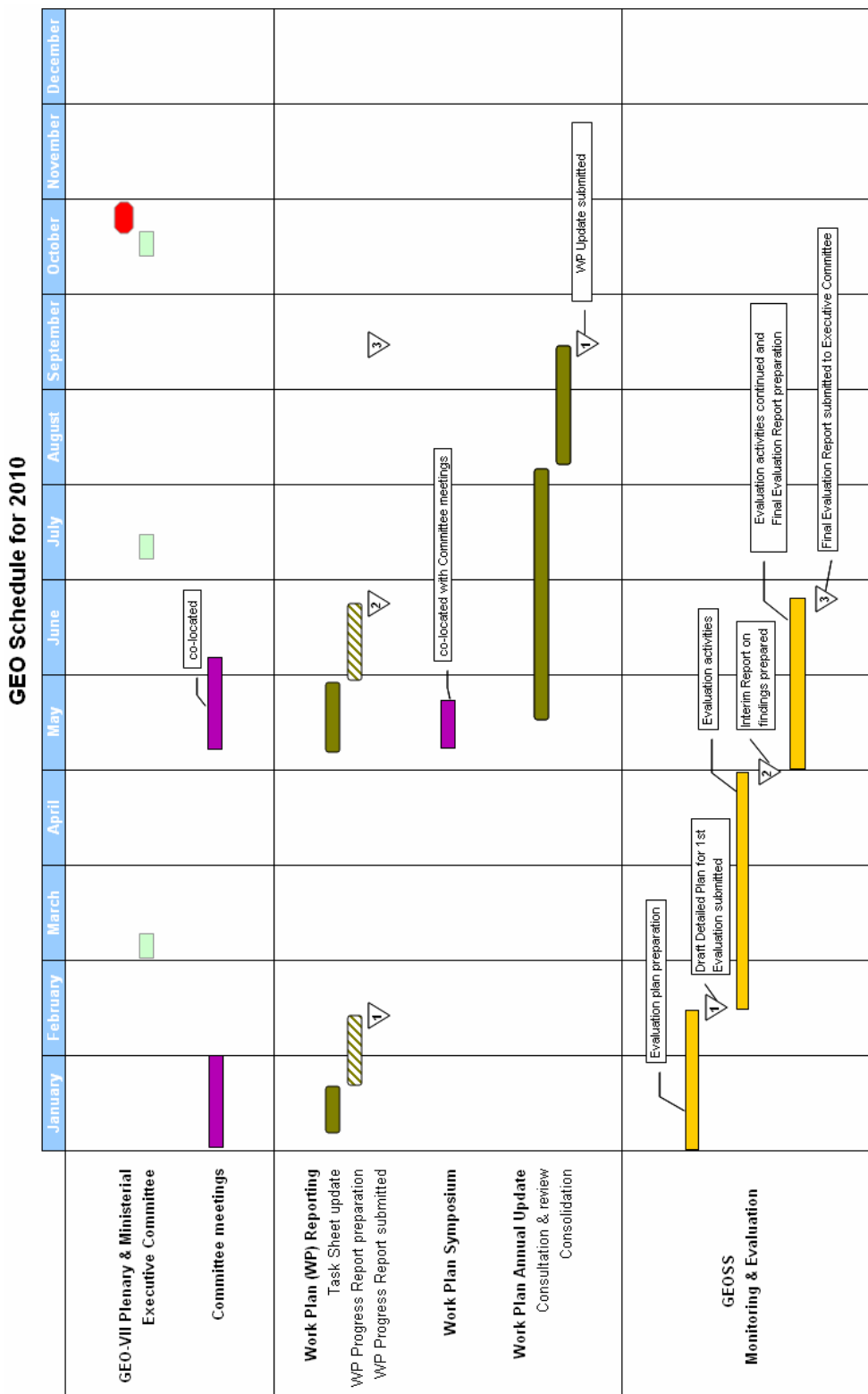
The Committee asked the Secretariat to circulate the dates of other relevant meetings to ensure that GEO-VII and the 2010 Ministerial Summit do not clash with other relevant international meetings. A decision is to be taken at the 17th meeting of the Executive Committee.

4 THE 17TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

(To be completed at the end of the 17th Executive Committee.)

Annex A

The GEO Master Schedule for 2010



Annex B

Terms of Reference for the Monitoring & Evaluation Working Group as adopted by the 17th meeting of the Executive Committee

Purpose

The Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group (M&E WG) will coordinate monitoring and evaluation of GEOSS implementation until 2015, the end of the 10-year Plan.

Objectives

The M&E WG is convened to:

- Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework document defining the monitoring and evaluation of GEOSS implementation, including outcome performance indicators and drawing from the outline prepared at the September 10-12, 2008 workshop where appropriate.
- Develop a plan for the first evaluation of GEOSS implementation, including provisions for overseeing the execution of the plan. The final report of this evaluation should be completed by mid 2010, for use in planning the Earth Observation Summit anticipated in November 2010. Develop plans for subsequent evaluations, responding to lessons learned from previous evaluations.
- Provide oversight of the execution of the M&E process

Approach and Functions

- Adapt best practices and tools in use by other organizations for monitoring and evaluation as applicable to the GEOSS context.
- Identify criteria for evaluating the success of GEOSS based on the Societal Benefit Areas, (crosscutting areas) Strategic Targets and Tasks in the GEO Work Plan.
- Develop a set of viable, yet uncomplicated indicators to monitor GEOSS implementation with particular emphasis on outcomes, as stated in the strategic targets for GEOSS.
- Ensure that the evaluation covers subtasks and overarching tasks of the Workplan, strategic targets, and other high-level collaborations within GEO.
- Implement the monitoring and evaluation framework through a phased approach.
- Review the existing GEOSS reporting system and utilize it in the monitoring and evaluation process as appropriate.
- Build, where appropriate, on tools and methodologies being used by task contributors for monitoring and evaluation of task activities.
- Provide recommendations to Executive Committee for mobilizing financial and human resources to implement the framework and accomplish the first evaluation of GEOSS implementation.
- Report to the GEO Executive Committee and the GEO Plenary the results of the first and subsequent evaluations and respond to lessons learned.

Annex C

Performance of the Secretariat and Secretariat Director Duties, Documents and Assessment

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
a) Prepare and submit, for Plenary approval, the Annual Work Plan - including activities and budgets;	3-Year Work Plan Update (Plenary document)	Technical and official reviews organized on June-Sept 2009. Update document submitted on 5 Oct (Plenary)	
b) Support the implementation by Members and Participating Organizations of the Annual Work Plan and execute expenditure of the budget;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Fulfilled. Budget remained balanced on each year since GEO was established	
c) Provide annual reports on the performance of GEOSS, including milestones of the Annual Work Plan;	Work Plan Progress Report (Plenary document) Monitoring and Evaluation Report (Plenary document)	Task Sheet update coordinated by GEO Secretariat in January, March, August. Three reports prepared, two for June and September Executive Committee meetings and one major, illustrated, for GEO-VI	
d) Provide annual reports on Secretariat operations, including execution of annual budget expenditures;	a) Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document) b) Financial statement and Report on income and expenditure (Plenary documents)	Secretariat Operations and financial statements submitted in June, September and November 2009	
e) Organize, prepare, and support meetings and other	Assessments from GEO Committees on the	Three Executive Committee,	

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
work of the GEO Plenary, Executive Committee, and other GEO committees and working groups;	support provided by the Secretariat. (Annex)	multiple teleconferences of Committees and Co-Chairs, Committee meetings, co-located Committee meetings in Australia, Plenary	
f) Pursue activities to identify and secure funds for Secretariat operations and GEO activities in accordance with the direction of GEO;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Increased the contribution of Members though the development of appropriate Tasks (Forest Carbon, Water,...)	
g) Oversee the implementation of the GEO communication;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Website newsletter, brochures, were designed, produced and distributed outreach at Plenary III, IV and V and Summit	
h) Organize the GEOSS user and other fora as required in coordination with GEO Committees as appropriate;	Assessments from GEO Committees on the support provided by the Secretariat. (Annex)	Increasing number of CoPs. Support to User testing of portal	
i) Facilitate overall cooperation and liaise with GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and other programmes and bodies as appropriate or as needed to support the work of GEO, with particular emphasis on existing systems and Earth observation coordination mechanisms;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Fulfilled. Numerous examples in mentioned reports	
j) Identify staffing and other resources necessary to support the Annual Work Plan, develop indicators for	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Fulfilled in all reports. Secretariat remaining properly staffed at all times	

GEO Secretariat duties	Supporting documents	GEO Secretariat assessment	Executive Committee comments
Secretariat performance, and report to Plenary on Secretariat performance against indicators;			
k) Ensure an open and transparent process is utilized for all Secretariat employees, including short-term contractors, and for the designation of experts to the various GEO committees and working groups;	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	All positions are advertised on the GEO website and notified to the GEO Leadership	
l) Facilitate and coordinate the updating of the 10-Year Implementation Plan as directed by the Plenary;	Target Task Team (T3) Report (Plenary document)	Continuous work all year long by T3 and GEO Secretariat. Strategic Target document submitted to GEO-VI	
m) Conduct the day-to-day administrative activities of the Secretariat;	a) Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document) b) Reports from missions undertaken by members of the GEO Secretariat (Available upon request)	Fulfilled. Administrative functioning as always remained efficient and effective.	
n) Carry out additional duties as required by GEO.	Periodic Reports on Secretariat operations (Executive Committee document)	Fulfilled	