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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **China inaugurates new satellite system to provide environmental data to users throughout the Asia/Pacific**

#### **FengYunCast will ease access to Earth observations for developing countries**

Beijing, 10 October 2007 – The Government of China has formally initiated a new satellite communications system that will enable developing countries without powerful Internet connections to access and use environmental data and analyses, which are critical for decision-making in today's complex and fast-moving world.

The announcement was made during an Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop in Beijing on the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). The 10-11 October workshop has been co-sponsored by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) – responsible for coordinating the development of GEOSS – and the Chinese Meteorological Administration (CMA).

“FengYunCast – which in Chinese means ‘winds and clouds’ – will make the vast quantity of Earth observations being generated around the world easily available to developing country institutions responsible for responding to disasters, addressing climate change, conserving biological diversity and much more,” said Mr. Zheng Guoguang, a Co-Chair of GEO and the Administrator of CMA.

“Until now, many countries in the Asia/Pacific region were at a disadvantage relative to the industrialized world when it came to accessing information that could help them respond to forest fires or tsunamis or manage their water and energy resources. China's initiative in providing FengYunCast promises to change that,” said Mr. José Achache, Director of the GEO Secretariat.

FengYunCast now constitutes the Asia/Pacific region hub of GEONETCast, a near real-time, global delivery system for environmental information (see map on next page.) The system obtains Earth observations from the numerous land-, sea-, air- and space-based systems that together constitute GEOSS. It then transmits this information to users through specialized communications satellites.

The users being targeted by GEONETCast include developing country institutions with limited or no access to high-speed Internet. Compared to other communications channels, the costs are remarkably low – a mere \$2,000 to 3,000 to purchase and set up the receiving station.

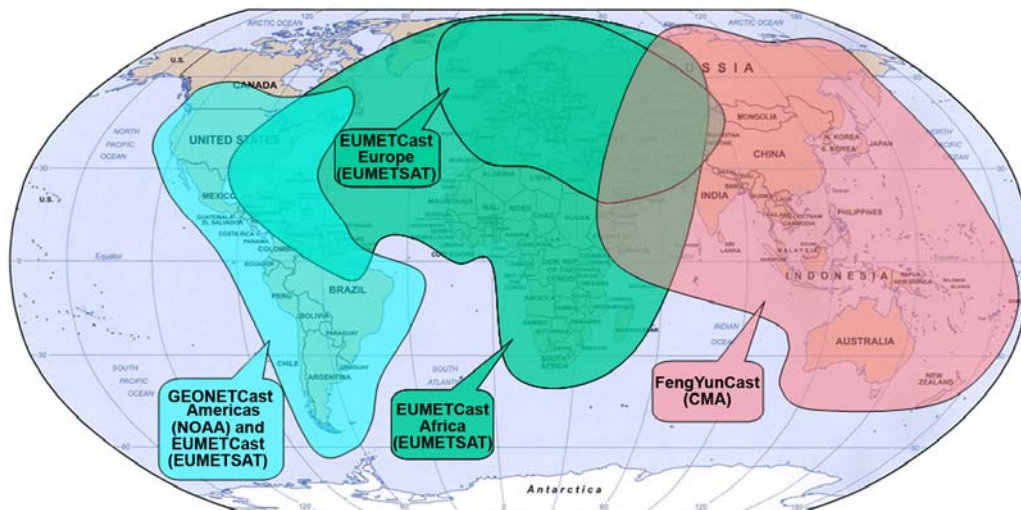
The GEONETCast system now has two fully operational regional hubs, FengYunCast for the Asia/Pacific and EUMETCast for Europe and Africa. A third hub, called GEONETCast Americas, is expected to be on-line by November. This will virtually complete GEONETCast's global coverage, a

result that will be demonstrated to dozens of Government Ministers when they attend the 30 November Ministerial Summit on Earth Observations in Cape Town, South Africa. The Russian Federation's satellite distribution system MITRA also plans to join GEONETCast as a fourth hub covering the Arctic region in the near future.

The Group on Earth Observations was established in 2005 after the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the Group of Eight leading industrialized countries (G8) and three ministerial Earth Observation Summits all called for improving existing observation systems. It boasts over 70 member countries and 45 participating organizations.

GEO focuses on nine priorities of critical importance to the future of the human race. It aims to help us protect ourselves against natural and human-induced disasters, understand the environmental sources of health hazards, manage energy resources, respond to climate change and its impacts, safeguard freshwater resources, improve weather forecasts, manage ecosystems, promote sustainable agriculture, and conserve biodiversity.

## Global GEONETCast Coverage



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