

Honorable Ministers, Delegates, head of Participating Organizations,

on behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and on behalf of State Secretary Jörg Hennerkes who extends his apologies for not being able to attend this summit let me first appreciate the efforts of South Africa in the GEOSS activities and especially in hosting the GEO-IV summit.

Please allow me to read out the statement of State Secretary Hennerkes:

The overarching theme of this summit – „Earth Observation for Sustainable Growth and Development“ – is at the heart of developing GEOSS. It is a crucial element of several of the global challenges that we are confronted with today. Achieving growth and development sustainably means, above all, to manage and use our natural resources like clean water, clean air, land, and biodiversity conscientiously. But this also means a safe and reliable energy supply and the ability to protect ourselves against natural disasters and adapt to climate change. These are global challenges – and as such, they require concerted action.

With GEO we launched an initiative to build GEOSS – the Global System of Earth Observing Systems. This is based on our shared conviction that GEOSS can help us to respond to these challenges, these are :

- ▶ Only comprehensive, long-term monitoring of the earth system allows the scientific understanding of fundamental processes. Climate change is an example for this.
- ▶ Only this scientific understanding allows modeling these processes and predicting developments under different conditions.
- ▶ And only such reliable scenarios of future developments open options for decisions – creating scope for policy making.

Therefore our vision of GEOSS is one of a tool for knowledge-based policy making.

The **Report on Progress** and its **Annex**, presented today, demonstrate impressively that GEOSS is becoming more and more attractive. It brings together numerous projects, programs and initiatives in the field of earth observations. I say: GEOSS is on a promising path.

Powerful earth observing systems have long been operated in many parts of the world; however, the global challenges are also prompting additional efforts to close observational gaps and obtain other parameters. In this context the GMES initiative – “Global Monitoring for Environment and Security” – of the European Union can be highlighted as a substantial contribution, one of the primary building blocks of GEOSS.

Many GEOSS components already exist. GEOSS now has to prove that it is adding value and is more than the sum of its parts.

The GEO 10-Year-Implementation Plan, accepted in 2005, remains the guide for developing GEOSS globally. This month, the German government have, for the first time, agreed on a national GEOSS Implementation Plan. This national strategy for implementing GEOSS also establishes the fundamental relations to the European context.

Germany welcomes the Declaration presented by Minister Mangena. It presents the context of our meeting and touches upon the central themes for the coming years, which I want to re-emphasize briefly:

- ▶ We must ensure the operations of the important earth observing systems in the long-term.

Support for developing countries is of particular importance in this context.

- ▶ A crucial aspect of ensuring the future operation of many earth observation systems is the availability of the electromagnetic frequencies they use. There is good news that ITU has agreed to protect relevant frequencies in the future.
- ▶ Finally we must forcefully advance the implementation of the GEO principles for data sharing. This is the prerequisite for GEOSS to really offer a dramatically improved data base. It is on us to fulfill this prerequisite.

Ministers , Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Germany supports these goals and endorses the **Cape Town Declaration**.

In closing I would not like to miss the opportunity to thank the Director and the staff of the Geo-Secretariat for their good work in assisting us in reaching our goals.

Thank you for your attention.