Draft Report
53rd Executive Committee Meeting
Teleconference, 3-4 November 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chair: Li Pengde, China.

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

1.1 Welcome from Lead Co-Chair and Co-Chairs

1.2 Adoption of Agenda (Document 53.1 (Rev.1) – for decision)

Outcome: The agenda was adopted as distributed.

1.3 Draft Report of the 52nd Executive Committee Meeting (Document 53.2 – for decision)

Outcome: The document was approved as distributed.

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings (Document 53.3 – for decision)

Outcome: The document was approved as distributed.

1.5 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 52.4 – for information)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for its work in 2020, which resulted in considerable progress in many areas despite the difficult working conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Requested that the Secretariat include reporting on progress toward the Canberra Declaration in future Secretariat Operations presentations.

2 SESSION 2: UPDATE FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS ADVISORY GROUP (PIAG)

2.1 Update from the PIAG (Document 53.5 – for decision)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Approved the PIAG terms of reference as distributed; and
- Requested that the reference to “Pacific Islands” in the presentation be corrected to “Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)”.

3 SESSION 3: GEO WORK PROGRAMME

3.1 Report of the Programme Board (Document 53.6 – for discussion)

Outcome: The Executive Committee thanked the Programme Board members and co-chairs for their contributions and effort through 2020.

3.2 Review of Nominations to the Programme Board (Document 53.7 – for decision)

Outcome: The Executive Committee approved the slate recommended by the Secretariat.

3.3 Proposal to make Urban Resilience a fourth Engagement Priority (Document 53.9 – for decision)

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee thanked the Programme Board Urban Resilience Subgroup for the document and presentation, noting that the issue of sustainable urbanization deserves a GEO response; however, concerns were raised regarding the capacity of GEO to support a fourth engagement priority at this time;
- Since consensus was not reached during the discussion, the Chair proposed that the topic be raised again during session 4. The Executive Committee agreed to this revision of the agenda.

3.4 GEO Mid-term Evaluation Interim Report (Document 53.10 – for discussion)

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee thanked the Mid-term Evaluation Team for their report, noting that due to COVID-19 the team was working under difficult conditions;
- Executive Committee members suggested that, to the extent possible within the available time and resources, the Mid-term Evaluation Team expand their focus to include consideration of engagement of developing countries; interconnections between global, regional and national GEO organizations; and the achievements of the GEO Work Programme;
- The Executive Committee encouraged the GEO community, particularly those in under-represented regions, to complete the Community Survey and to volunteer for interviews.

4 SESSION 4: GEO WORK PROGRAMME (ON BEHALF OF PLENARY)

4.1 Update to the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme (Document 53.13 – for decision on behalf of Plenary)

Outcome: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present accepted the update to the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme and welcomed the two new Community Activities.

4.2 Proposal to make Urban Resilience a fourth Engagement Priority (Document 53.9 – for decision)

Outcome: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present:

- Stated their provisional support of urban resilience as a priority, noting the importance of the issue for GEO; and
- Deferred a formal decision on whether to include urban resilience as a fourth engagement priority until the GEO-17 Plenary.

Action 53.1: Programme Board, with support from the Urban Resilience Subgroup and the Secretariat, to present an engagement plan on urban resilience to the Executive Committee. **Due: 54th Executive Committee meeting**.

4.3 Programme Board Membership Slate for 2021 (Presentation by the Secretariat – for endorsement on behalf of Plenary)

Outcome: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present endorsed the Programme Board slate.

4.4 Update on Implementation of the GEO Knowledge Hub (Presentation by the Secretariat – for discussion)

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present supported the development of the GEO Knowledge Hub and thanked the Secretariat for the update;
- The Executive Committee noted the importance of collaboration within the GEOSS Infrastructure Development Task Team (GIDTT) on integrating the GEO Knowledge Hub with other components of the GEOSS infrastructure;
- GEO Members present encouraged the GEO Knowledge Hub team to continue consultations with users and with the Capacity Development Working Group to ensure that the design addresses the needs of GEO Members and other users.

5 SESSION 5: SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS (ON BEHALF OF PLENARY)

5.1 2021 GEO Trust Fund Budget (Document 52.14(Rev1) – for decision on behalf of Plenary)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present:

- Approved the GEO Trust Fund Budget, as proposed by the Budget Working Group; and
- Thanked the Budget Working Group for its work and thanked Australia for serving as chair in 2020.

Action 53.2: Secretariat to issue a call for members of the Budget Working Group. **Due: 30 November 2020.**

5.2 Resource Mobilization for the GEO Trust Fund (Presentation by the Chair of the Budget Working Group – for discussion)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present:

- Thanked the Budget Working Group and the Secretariat for their organization of the Pledge Campaign; and
- Encouraged GEO Members and others in the GEO community to contribute to the campaign.

5.3 New GEO Members 2020 (Document 52.14(Rev1) – for decision on behalf of Plenary)

Outcomes: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present welcomed the following GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and GEO Associates that joined in 2020:

GEO Members	Participating Organizations	GEO Associates
Namibia	Coalition for Rainforest Nations	AmericaView
Nicaragua	Micronesia Conservation Trust	Centre for Spatial Law and Policy
Rwanda	Pan American Institute of Geography and History	Eversis
	Plan4all	Geoterra Image
	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe	Water Youth Network

5.4 Announcement of the Next GEO Secretariat Director

Outcomes:

- The Chair announced that the next Secretariat Director will be Yana Gevorgyan;
- The Executive Committee and GEO Members present congratulated Ms Gevorgyan on her appointment;
- Ms Gevorgyan thanked the Executive Committee for their recognition of her commitment to GEO and for giving her their confidence.

6 SESSION 6: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2021

6.1 Announcement of the 2021 Lead Co-Chair

Outcomes:

- The Chair announced that the 2021 GEO Lead Co-Chair will be Patrick Child of the European Commission;
- Mr. Child outlined his plan for the development of the 2021 Lead Co-Chair Goals and Objectives.

Action 53.3: European Commission to distribute a draft of the Lead Co-Chair Goals and Objectives for 2021. **Due: 18 December 2020.**

Following distribution of the draft, Executive Committee members will have an opportunity to provide comments. A revised version of the document will be presented to the 54th Executive Committee meeting for approval

6.2 Executive Committee Membership Slate for 2021

Outcomes:

- The Chair presented the list of Executive Committee members for 2021;
- The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present thanked the departing members Italy and Switzerland and welcomed the new members Germany and Greece.

6.3 Dates for the 54th and 55th Executive Committee Meetings and GEO Week 2021

Outcomes:

- The 54th Executive Committee meeting will be held 16-17 March 2021;
- The 55th Executive Committee meeting will be held 6-7 July 2021;
- GEO Week 2021 will take place in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, 22-27 November.

7 SESSION 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

7.1 Any Other Business

7.2 Review of Action Items

Draft Report
53rd Executive Committee Meeting
Teleconference, 3-4 November 2020

FULL REPORT

Tuesday, 3 November 2020

Meeting convened at 13:00

Chair: Li Pengde, China.

Meeting adjourned at 16:00

1 SESSION 1: GENERAL BUSINESS

1.1 Welcome from Lead Co-Chair and Co-Chairs

Li Penge, Lead Co-Chair representative and Chair of the meeting, opened the meeting by welcoming participants and expressing his expectation for a fruitful meeting.

Huang Wei, China Lead Co-Chair, thanked Executive Committee members and the GEO Secretariat for their preparations for the meeting. He remarked that, despite 2020 being an unusual year, the GEO community was continuing to meet in a "remote sensing way" and still collaborating to achieve progress on GEO goals. Among the areas of progress include starting implementation of the Canberra Declaration and the GEO Knowledge Hub, furthering the relationship with UN-Habitat on urban resilience, and the selection of the next Secretariat Director, congratulating Yana Gevorgyan on her appointment. As the GEO Co-Chair representing Asia-Oceania, Mr Huang noted the successful completion of the Third Asia-Oceania GEO (AOGEO) Workshop, held in Changzhou Jiangsu, China 27-31 October using a combined live and online format. Mr Huang also noted the planned 13th AOGEO Symposium in early 2021 in Tokyo, Japan. Turning to activities in China, Mr Huang announced a new series of China GEO Cooperation Initiative (CGCI) projects. This initiative is intended to strengthen research within China GEO, as well as with GEO Members and Participating Organizations. On top of the existing 15 CGCI projects, an additional CNY 60 million will be allocated to 15 more projects in various fields. China has also done fruitful research in the GEO-ARC framework on climate change, food security, urban sustainable development, and other global concerns. A series of data sets have been made available on the GEOSS Portal and China GEO Portal dealing with the Antarctic, effects of locusts on crop production, and analysis of urban expansion and green coverage. China published a report in 2020 on big Earth data in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and released a new version of global 30-metre resolution land cover data set. Level-4 data from China's first seismo-electromagnetic satellite Zhangheng 1 has also been released on the GEOSS Portal and the China GEO Portal. Mr Huang concluded by noting that this would be his last Executive Committee meeting as Lead Co-Chair and offered his full support to the incoming Lead Co-Chair, Patrick Child of the European Commission.

Patrick Child, European Commission Lead Co-Chair, welcomed all those joining the meeting and stated that, while the Executive Committee was still unable to meet in person, he hoped that they would be able to do so in 2021. Mr Child thanked China for exercising its Lead Co-Chair duties despite very challenging with calm and strong leadership, thus enabling GEO to make very good progress. He stated that the European Commission is more than ever ready to work with other Executive Committee members to strengthen Earth observations in all the GEO regions. In particular, the Commission is keen to promote the uptake of various supported activities in the GEO Work Programme, including the Global Forest Observation Initiative (GFOI), the Global Agricultural Monitoring Initiative (GEOGLAM), the Biodiversity Observation Network (GEOBON), and GEO Blue Planet. The Commission is keen to strengthen GEO's efforts in each of the engagement priorities, as well as to continue its strong support to the GEOSS infrastructure, seeing it as a key contribution to the recognition of the GEOSS infrastructure as a key knowledge hub to inform policies in support of people and the planet. While we are facing a very challenging situation at the moment, the Commission takes a positive and pragmatic view in terms of working with other like-minded international partners and initiatives like GEO, and to look for ways in which to share best practices and to achieve collective impacts. Mr Child stated that he looked forward to working with the new Secretariat Director and congratulated Ms Gevorgyan on her new role.

Stephen Volz, United States Co-Chair, observed that 2020 had been an extraordinary, chaotic, and tragic year with the pandemic. While acknowledging those we have lost, Mr Volz stated that he was gratified by the efforts and commitments that have been made toward the collective efforts in GEO. He noted that GEO's work has never been more important than it is now and was delighted to see that the GEO community was not just maintaining the status quo but making considerable progress despite the difficult conditions. Mr Volz said that he looked forward to hearing about efforts in all regions to broaden GEO's reach and to serve communities that are stressed and needing our services, in particular, the proposal on urban resilience put forward by the Programme Board. He concluded by thanking the GEO team for being so productive during the year.

Mmboneni Muofhe, South Africa Co-Chair, stated his pleasure at joining other Executive Committee members in what was becoming a normal way of business. He acknowledged the very good leadership of China as Lead Co-Chair and noted that the hiring process for the Secretariat Director was well managed. Mr Muofhe thanked all those involved in advancing the GEOSS infrastructure. He observed that the pandemic had provided lessons on the need for equity, such as access to information, and Earth observations have been crucial in the response to COVID-19, for example, in mapping settlements. It was clear that the response would have been more difficult for South Africa if it had not been working with the global Earth observations community and thus GEO is more relevant than ever. GEO will have a huge role in ensuring the world is a better place, building capacity especially in regions where it is difficult to gain access. The impact of GEO will be felt in the way it helps those who are powerless and those who may not realize the value of Earth observations until they are impacted by disasters.

Gilberto Camara, Secretariat Director, thanked China and its leadership for their responsiveness and dedication to helping the Secretariat during the year. He also expressed his pleasure at the selection of Ms Gevorgyan as the next Director, stating that she had demonstrated a strong commitment to GEO and its future. Mr Camara thanked

the other Co-Chairs for their support as well, which enables the Secretariat to continue its work. He noted that 2020 had been a difficult year for all, many of whom have lost close friends and family. Earth observations had indeed had an impact on the response to COVID-19, but there was an additional lesson on the need for open science. Not only was the data available, but also the methods and the rationale for recommendations were openly shared. GEO needs to reflect on the need to share the knowledge needed to extract value from data. Mr Camara thanked the Executive Committee for its approval of the implementation of the GEO Knowledge Hub, stating that the Secretariat is committed to supporting all players, public and private, to have a level playing field. The Secretariat is also trying to build awareness across the GEO community of the possibilities of new technologies, including cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and data cubes. GEO needs to ensure that the availability of big data for countries is accompanied by access to the knowledge required to use it. Mr Camara stated that the Secretariat takes the Canberra Declaration very seriously and the GEO Week 2020 was organized around some of its key themes. He thanked all those who had been involved in the organization of the week, recognizing specifically the role of the Budget Working Group in the organization of the GEO Pledge Campaign. Mr Camara concluded by saying that he was proud to lead such a distinguished group of staff as those in the Secretariat, who had demonstrated their outstanding commitment and dedication and deserved the support of GEO Members.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda (Document 53.1 (Rev.1) – for decision)

The Chair reminded Executive Committee members that the agenda was streamlined due to the virtual format and thus some documents will be considered as approved unless there are requests for changes. The Chair called for any changes to the agenda, but there were no interventions.

Outcome: The agenda was adopted as distributed.

1.3 Draft Report of the 52nd Executive Committee Meeting (Document 53.2 – for decision)

No requests for changes were made.

Outcome: The document was approved as distributed.

1.4 Review of Action Items from Previous Meetings (Document 53.3 – for decision)

No requests for changes were made.

Outcome: The document was approved as distributed.

1.5 Secretariat Operations Report (Document 52.4 – for information)

The Secretariat Director presented some of the highlights of the work of the Secretariat. He noted that the key activity of the Secretariat is the support to the GEO Work Programme, which engages the whole Secretariat. GEOGLAM had gone from strength to strength, becoming a global reference source in agricultural monitoring. GEO BON received significant support from Microsoft Azure in the form of cloud credits and cash grants for a series of projects on Essential Biodiversity Variables. It had also recently selected a new lead and re-located its secretariat to Montreal. GFOI had produced a

much-enhanced version of their Methods and Guidance Document and the Secretariat has been working closely with GFOI on several topics. The role of GOS4M in supporting the Minamata Convention was clearly recognized and the GEO Secretariat was also given Observer status at the Convention. GOS4M has also received approval for a new inclusive and global governance structure. EO4SDG has combined with UN-Habitat to develop a toolkit for sustainable cities, further cementing GEO's role as an important partner of UN-Habitat. The Secretariat has also teamed up with the Belmont Forum to promote use of Earth observations for research projects funded by the Forum on pathways to sustainability, which is bringing GEO to the attention of a large research community. Mr Camara noted that the Foundational Task Working Groups have been a great success, with outstanding participation of experts from around the globe. The process has brought many new interested parties into the GEO community. A stronger relationship with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has also been developed; Mr Camara thanked Switzerland in particular for its support and legal advice in this regard. GEO is preparing to contribute to the global stocktake, together with CEOS. Improved relations with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) were being developed, noting the invitation for GEO to present at the WMO Data Conference. Mr Camara thanked WMO staff Anthony Rea and Werner Baloch for their efforts in this regard. The strong relationship with CEOS was highlighted. Among the areas of collaboration included analysis-ready data (ARD), the Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Uses (AFOLU) roadmap, and the biomass protocol. Mr Camara also observed that the incoming CEOS Chair had listed open science as a priority, which is also a key issue for GEO. Urban resilience is becoming a critical issue for GEO, noting that adaptation in cities is a key part of the green economy. Mr Camara urged Executive Committee members to support the topic as an engagement priority. The Secretariat has also been supporting engagement of small, medium, and micro-sized enterprises (SMMEs) in GEO. A key question here is how to share risks between the public and private actions. Mr Camara noted that there was no complete answer to this but there is a need to ensure a level playing field. He drew attention to the Open Earth Alliance, a new GEO Community Activity, which is bringing together various actors to develop open-source tools which will help enable vendor independence and global access. Mr Camara drew attention to the GEO Pledge Campaign as part of the resource mobilization strategy. He concluded by thanking Japan, France, ITC, and Germany for their current and planned secondments to the Secretariat.

The Chair thanked Mr Camara for his leadership of the Secretariat, observing that the Secretariat had done a great job in meeting the increased demands due to COVID-19.

CEOS thanked the Director for his presentation and his offer to work with CEOS on the biomass protocol and the AFOLU roadmap.

Australia noted the updates on the implementation of the Canberra Declaration in the Secretariat Operations Report and asked whether a verbal update could be provided during the second day of the Executive Committee meeting.

The United States noted that, in the section of the report concerning the Belmont Forum collaboration, there was a statement that GEO would provide "access" to GEO Work Programme activities. This was inconsistent with GEO principles as GEO Work Programme activities are open to everyone without restriction. Regarding the mention of secondments to the Secretariat, the United States hoped that there would be opportunity

for virtual secondments as well, especially given the experience gained in dealing with the pandemic.

South Africa congratulated the Secretariat for its excellent report and its support to the various committees within GEO. It welcomed the progress that had been made with UN-Habitat on urban resilience and the opportunity to discuss this in detail later in the meeting. The work of the Secretariat on private sector engagement was also appreciated, especially about the focus on SMMEs and the connection to GEO Members. The support of the Secretariat to the organization of the virtual industry track in GEO Week 2020 was welcomed, observing that there were over 200 participants in this event.

The European Commission echoed the thanks to the Director and the Secretariat, noting the intensification of partnerships around the engagement priorities and the new Community Activity on Climate Change Impacts on World Heritage Cities. The Commission drew attention to the statistical cooperation with the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM). It was agreed that there was a need to advance collaboration with the private sector in a broad way, especially with SMMEs.

The Secretariat Director responded to Australia that there is a lot happening in GEO regarding around the Canberra Declaration and, indeed, GEO Week 2020 was organized in response to its themes; however, the Secretariat Operations Report only includes Secretariat actions. Mr Camara also agreed that cooperation with the private sector should respect vendor independence and should focus on SMMEs.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Thanked the Secretariat for its work in 2020, which resulted in considerable progress in many areas despite the difficult working conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Requested that the Secretariat include reporting on progress toward the Canberra Declaration in future Secretariat Operations presentations.

2 SESSION 2: UPDATE FROM THE PACIFIC ISLANDS ADVISORY GROUP (PIAG)

2.1 Update from the PIAG (Document 53.5 – for decision)

Andrew Jones, Director of Geoscience, Energy and Maritime at the Pacific Community (SPC) and member of the PIAG, presented the update on behalf of the Advisory Group. He reminded Executive Committee members that the Pacific Community is an extension of Pacific island governments that provides Earth observation services and is a GEO Participating Organization. Mr Jones began with a review of the key drivers leading to the formation of the PIAG, notably articles 10 and 11 of the Canberra Declaration and the 5 November 2019 Talanoa Statement "EO in the Pacific". In response to these drivers, the Executive Committee established the PIAG to "recommend ways to improve communication and engagement in GEO by the Pacific and other island nations". Since its establishment, the PIAG has grown to include five GEO Members and six Participating Organizations. It is co-chaired by Australia, China, and the Pacific Community. The PIAG has held six videoconferences of the group, plus additional meetings of the co-chairs and the GEO Secretariat. Mr Jones then went on to highlight several opportunities, including initial work on creating a Digital Earth Pacific,

engagement of existing networks such as the Pacific Geospatial and Surveying Council, and the offer from China of high-resolution satellite imagery. The PIAG had also identified some key challenges, which included the time zone difference between the Pacific and the GEO Secretariat (10-12 hours) and the fact that Pacific island governments have relatively few staff but large remits. Mr Jones then described the key components of the draft PIAG terms of reference, drawing attention to the proposed duration of the PIAG which would extend to the end of 2022 and to the provisions for reporting. He concluded by requesting that the Executive Committee endorse the terms of reference.

Australia endorsed the terms of reference and congratulated the team on their work. The importance of listening to the Pacific islands and adapting GEO's offer based on their needs was emphasized.

France also thanked the group for their work and accepted the proposal. They stated that it was important for the Executive Committee to continue to receive regular short reports.

The European Commission, Japan, Korea, and South Africa indicated their support.

China stated that they also supported approval of the terms of reference but requested a correction to the presentation slides. It was suggested that the group focus on the impacts of climate change and welcomed other countries to also provide support to the region.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee:

- Approved the PIAG terms of reference as distributed; and
- Requested that the reference to "Pacific Islands" in the presentation be corrected to "Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs)".

3 SESSION 3: GEO WORK PROGRAMME

3.1 Report of the Programme Board (Document 53.6 – for discussion)

Andiswa Mlisa, Programme Board co-chair (South Africa), presented the report on behalf of the Programme Board. She began by thanking the GEO community for their efforts and the progress they made during the year and the Secretariat for its support to the Programme Board. Summarizing the outcomes of the 18th meeting of the Programme Board, the 2020 update to the GEO Work Programme was reviewed and approved by the Board, while noting this item would be discussed in more detail in session four of this meeting. The Programme Board also reviewed lessons learned from the 2020 GEO Symposium which was conducted online for the first time. Ms Mlisa observed that the participation numbers decreased through the week, though this was similar to in-person meetings. Going forward, and based on the results of the survey, a mix of in-person and online participation would be sought. A new Symposium subgroup would be established early in the new year. The Board received updates from each of the Foundational Task Working Groups, acknowledging the progress made and providing specific recommendations to each Working Group. Ms Mlisa drew attention to the GEO Awards presentation which would occur that evening. The Programme Board reviewed and approved the terms of reference for the Awards subgroup at the 18th meeting and had asked that the subgroup also formalize and document their criteria and processes, as well as suggesting the creation of a new category of award for groups and teams.

Regarding urban resilience, Ms Mlisa noted the significant work by the subgroup on the topic and stated that the Programme Board had endorsed the proposal, though with the recommendation that the topic be inclusive of all human settlements, not only cities. Tremendous progress had also been realized by the Private Sector subgroup and particularly noted the organization of the first virtual industry track during GEO Week 2020 which had attracted more than 400 participants from across all GEO regions. The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) subgroup was collecting some useful information; Ms Mlisa drew attention to the low participation of women and people from Africa, while recognizing that the organizers of GEO Week 2020 had made extra efforts to achieve geographic and gender diversity among the speakers. She then described the efforts of the Programme Board in engaging GEO Work Programme activities through a series of teams established early in the year. The process was resulting in good insights and while some issues raised were relatively easy to address, others will require more discussion by the Board. Ms Mlisa thanked the Secretariat for organizing the calls and the activity leads for taking the time to participate. The Programme Board also received a report from the Secretariat on lessons learned from the various cloud computing programmes that are underway within GEO. The Board appreciated the frankness of the lessons, both positive and negative, and highlighted the need for more capacity development to enable countries to use these technologies. Ms Mlisa concluded by thanking the members of the Programme Board whose terms were ending in 2020.

The European Commission stated that it appreciated the work of the Programme Board, the update to the GEO Work Programme, and the GEO Virtual Symposium, noting that the lessons learned had wider implications for GEO. It welcomed the decision by the Data Working Group to create a dedicated subgroup on the issues of data ethics and possible misuse of personal data and looked forward to perhaps seeing a set of data ethics principles to complement the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles. The Commission also noted the lessons learned from the cloud computing programmes. It observed that there was perhaps a proliferation of various subgroups and teams and expressed the concern that this not undermine the ability of GEO to deliver on its objectives. Overall, the Commission expressed the view that the Programme Board was delivering genuine value.

Japan appreciated the intensive effort of the Programme Board and its contribution to GEO. It also welcomed the engagement teams and their active support of the GEO Work Programme. Japan noted that 2021 would be a critical year for the GEO Work Programme but asked how the Programme Board would ensure progress if COVID-19 continued.

Australia thanked the Programme Board co-chairs for their exceptional job at driving the work of the Programme Board in difficult circumstances.

South Africa said that they appreciated and supported the work of the Programme Board, noting that the progress on the urban resilience priority was very important for South Africa. It noted that the Programme Board's efforts complemented the work they are doing with industry partners, expressing the need for inclusiveness in a wide range of areas.

China thanked the Programme Board members and suggested that more attention be given to the PIAG, specifically in identifying which GEO Work Programme activities are relevant to Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs).

The United States endorsed the comments by the others, observing that there were many new participants to GEO in the Symposium, the Working Groups, and other activities. The Programme Board has demonstrated that they are looking across the GEO Work Programme activities, such as through their interest in capacity development and EDI. The Programme Board is thus doing exactly what GEO has asked it to do: to analyse cross-cutting issues. It is positive that the Programme Board has created the subgroups to see how GEO should address these issues.

Andiswa Mlisa responded to the question from Japan by saying that while a few GEO Work Programme activities were affected significantly by COVID-19, work continued relatively unaffected for most of them. At this point, the Programme Board does not foresee major impacts on the Work Programme.

France asked about the membership of the engagement teams. Ms Mlisa replied that the engagement teams are a continuation of the review teams that were set up in 2019 to develop the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme. Their focus has now shifted to providing continuing support and assistance to the Work Programme activities. The teams are all comprised of Programme Board members. The Secretariat can make the list of members available through the GEO website.

Outcome: The Executive Committee thanked the Programme Board members and co-chairs for their contributions and effort through 2020.

3.2 **Review of Nominations to the Programme Board (Document 53.7 – for decision)**

Craig Larlee, Work Programme Coordinator in the GEO Secretariat, presented the nominations and the Secretariat's recommendations. He began by observing that there were 14 Programme Board seats becoming vacant at the end of 2020, which is a relatively high number. Fortunately, there were 20 nominations received this year, an increase from 14 in 2018 and nine in 2019. Of the 20 nominations, nine were from GEO Members and Participating Organizations not currently serving on the Board, while 11 were from returning members. Two of the Participating Organizations later submitted a joint nomination. Mr Larlee then described the factors considered in developing the Secretariat recommendation. As the purpose of the Board is to manage the GEO Work Programme, preference is given to GEO Members and Participating Organizations that actively contribute to the Work Programme and are thus familiar with its activities and how it functions. For current members, the level of participation in Programme Board meetings, subgroups and other activities is also considered. More generally, the Secretariat monitors and takes account of regional, gender, and developing country representation, as well as ensuring a balance between new and continuing members. Mr Larlee concluded by listing each member of the slate of nominees recommended by the Secretariat, which included nine returning Programme Board members and five new members.

The United States, South Africa, Chile, China, Japan, Korea, France, Australia, and Italy concurred. China indicated that they hoped the Secretariat would consider the nomination of the International Society for Digital Earth the next time.

Outcome: The Executive Committee approved the slate recommended by the Secretariat.

3.3 **Proposal to make Urban Resilience a fourth Engagement Priority (Document 53.9 – for decision)**

Evangelos Gerasopoulos, co-chair of the Programme Board Urban Resilience Subgroup, presented the proposal on behalf of the Programme Board. He began by reminding Executive Committee members that this focus is based on the fact that urban areas account for a disproportionate share of the world's population, consumption and economic production, a share that will grow significantly greater in the next 30 years. Following the official request from UN-Habitat to the GEO Secretariat in June 2019, the Programme Board responded by holding a special session of the Programme Board on urban resilience, with representatives of UN-Habitat and from three of the most engaged GEO Work Programme activities. This was followed by the creation of an ad hoc urban resilience task force, later expanded into the Urban Resilience Subgroup. At the same time, the Programme Board, GEO Work Programme activities, and the GEO Secretariat have worked closely with UN-Habitat and other organizations in the urban domain. In contrast to the situation in 2016 when urban resilience was first raised at the Executive Committee as a possible engagement priority, there are now strong relationships in place between GEO and various other organizations and the New Urban Agenda (NUA) is being endorse, referenced, and used by many organizations worldwide as a basis for action. Mr Gerasopoulos stated that including urban resilience as a fourth GEO engagement priority would not duplicate existing efforts but would enable greater integration of the existing priorities under an urban focus. Recognition as an engagement priority was also expected to increase opportunities by catalysing new Work Programme activities and engagement of other organizations in the urban domain. It would also give greater visibility to existing GEO Work Programme activities with relevance to urban issues. With respect to the concern sometimes expressed regarding the adequacy of resources within GEO, Mr Gerasopoulos stated that the Secretariat was able to continue its efforts related to the NUA and the Urban Resilience Subgroup would also support implementation of the engagement priority. UN-Habitat is already closely engaged with GEO on this issue and this was expected to continue. Finally, while dedicated staff support within the Secretariat would be ideal, it was noted that such support was not put in place when the other engagement priorities were identified and indeed the recognition of urban resilience as an engagement priority was likely a precondition for obtaining the resources for dedicated Secretariat support. In conclusion, Mr Gerasopoulos stated that cities are where most changes are happening and where most opportunities lie and thus GEO must play a leading role in this area.

The United States stated that the presentation demonstrated that conditions have changed considerably in GEO since 2016. The Urban Resilience Subgroup is showing the value of collaboration across GEO Work Programme activities and it is looking like the issue has grown to the right level of maturity. The United States asked that the question be raised on the following day. However, they were sensitive to the impact on the

Secretariat and asked that the Secretariat describe how they would support a fourth engagement priority without detracting from the others.

The European Commission said that it was a very positive idea that merited careful reflection. They agreed that considerable progress had been made on the topic and it was clear that cities were relevant to many things that GEO was already doing on climate change, disaster risk reduction, and so on. Despite the assurances, however, there was still a risk of overlap which should be kept in mind. GEO should also look at the potential resource implications of this decision. It was suggested that the Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) team might be tasked to look into the matter further. In summary, while the Commission welcomed the idea in principle, it was felt that a wider consultation on the resource implications was needed before committing to a course of action.

Japan said that they appreciated the work of the Urban Resilience Subgroup on the proposal and supported it in general. It was noted that, if urban resilience were supported as a fourth engagement priority, the new secondment from Japan on disaster risk reduction could contribute to this priority.

South Africa stated that they were very supportive of the proposal and said that the question should be how GEO can make this proposal happen, not whether it should be done. In their view, it was better to start first, then seek resources.

China agreed that urbanization has brought many opportunities and challenges and supported making urban resilience a fourth engagement priority. As a developing country, however, China also believes that the work on this should not be limited to large urban areas, but also on the process of urbanization.

The Secretariat Director said that while a dedicated person to support urban resilience is important, we will never have the resources when it starts; the resources become available once GEO has demonstrated what can be achieved.

France said that the subject deserved a response but suggested that the issue be referred to the MTE team.

Justyna Nicinska, representative from the MTE team, reminded Executive Committee members that the team was charged with assessing GEO's performance over the past several years. Executive Committee should be careful about adding new items to their mandate, as focusing on urban resilience may take time away from their core mandate.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee thanked the Programme Board Urban Resilience Subgroup for the document and presentation, noting that the issue of sustainable urbanization deserves a GEO response; however, concerns were raised regarding the capacity of GEO to support a fourth engagement priority at this time;
- Since consensus was not reached during the discussion, the Chair proposed that the topic be raised again during session 4. The Executive Committee agreed to this revision of the agenda.

3.4 GEO Mid-term Evaluation Interim Report (Document 53.10 – for discussion)

Justyna Nicinska and Kate Hamer, presented the interim report on behalf of the MTE team. They began by reviewing the objectives that were set by the Executive Committee for the evaluation: namely, that it addresses the full scope of GEO activities since 2015 as intended under the 2016-2025 Strategic Plan, as well as the priorities identified in the Mexico City Declaration. The intent of the evaluation was to identify recommendations for refining the directions set out in the Strategic Plan, taking account of emerging trends and challenges. The data to support the evaluation is being gathered through several means, including review of documents, interviews with key informants, and surveys of the GEO community and the Secretariat staff. Special attention was being given to members of GEO governance bodies, representation from all GEO regions, and targeted interviews with particular groups such as from the private sector. Case studies may also be included in the final report, as required. Some of the key focus areas identified by the MTE team include: GEO's strategic narrative; GEO's interface with policy users; internal and external connectivity in GEO and among Earth observations systems; relations with the private sector; the funding model of the GEO Trust Fund; and the role of Regional GEOs. Ms Nicinska and Ms Hamer summarized the respondents to date by geographic region, type of institution and relationship to GEO, noting that more responses were needed, particularly from areas outside of Europe and North America. The MTE team was planning targeted approaches to increase representativeness of the informants. Ms Nicinska and Ms Hamer then concluded by reviewing the timeline toward completion of the evaluation. They noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had negatively impacted their ability to meet as a team and to collect data, although they were confident that the evaluation could still be completed on time.

South Africa stated that one of the features of GEO is the difference in engagement between developed and developing countries. Is there scope within the evaluation for a focus on this issue? Ms Nicinska and Ms Hamer responded that the issue is part of their terms of reference and the team intended to cover this issue as a section or case study. They had also heard this point in the surveys and interviews, so they assured Executive Committee members that it would be addressed.

The United States endorsed the work by the MTE team. Regarding the sufficiency of responses, they asked what Executive Committee members could do to help. Ms Nicinska responded that the community survey was still open, and the team was still doing interviews. Executive Committee members were invited to promote participation in both.

China said that the team was doing a very good job on a difficult task. The focus on interoperability was endorsed. China suggested to emphasize the interconnection between global, regional, and national GEOs. They also proposed that the team look at evaluating the achievements of GEO Work Programme activities. They also noted that it may be difficult to assess engagement in private sectors since GEO had only recently been active on this. Ms Nicinska responded that the topic of the private sector came out very strongly in the initial results and thus the team would be able to report on this element.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee thanked the Mid-term Evaluation Team for their report, noting that due to COVID-19 the team was working under difficult conditions;
- Executive Committee members suggested that, to the extent possible within the available time and resources, the Mid-term Evaluation Team expand their focus to include consideration of engagement of developing countries; interconnections between global, regional, and national GEO organizations; and the achievements of the GEO Work Programme;
- The Executive Committee encouraged the GEO community, particularly those in under-represented regions, to complete the Community Survey and to volunteer for interviews.

Meeting adjourned at 16:00

Wednesday, 4 November 2020

Meeting convened at 12:00

4 SESSION 4: GEO WORK PROGRAMME (ON BEHALF OF PLENARY)

4.1 Update to the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme (Document 53.13 – for decision on behalf of Plenary)

Craig Larlee presented the update on behalf of the Programme Board. He thanked the Programme Board members for their work through the year and in particular those members who will not be returning in 2021: Norway, the Committee on Space Research (COSPAR), Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN), the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG), and the Partnership for Observation of the Global Ocean (POGO). Mr Larlee reviewed the purpose and status of the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme, noting that it had been developed and approved in 2019, though updated annually. The GEO Work Programme is managed jointly by the Programme Board and the Secretariat; roles are defined in the GEO Rules of Procedure though in practice they work collaboratively in all aspects. There were relatively few changes to the Work Programme in 2020, which was likely due to its renewal in 2019 but also possibly affected by COVID-19. The main changes were the inclusion of the terms of reference of the four Foundational Task Working Groups and the addition of two new Community Activities: Earth Observations for Climate Change Impacts on World Heritage Cities and the Open Earth Alliance. Mr Larlee concluded by briefly describing each of the new Community Activities.

China and the United States indicated their endorsement of the GEO Work Programme update.

The European Commission thanked the Programme Board for their work and welcomed the inclusion of the new Community Activities. They indicated that they may suggest a few minor drafting changes.

Outcome: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present accepted the update to the 2020-2022 GEO Work Programme and welcomed the two new Community Activities.

4.2 Proposal to make Urban Resilience a fourth Engagement Priority (Document 53.9 – for decision)

The Chair introduced the item, stating for the benefit of the non-Executive Committee members present that the topic had been discussed the previous day. During that discussion, Executive Committee members recognized the importance of continuing research and other work related to urban resilience. However, concerns had also been raised about the impact on the three existing engagement priorities and the allocation of GEO resources.

Evangelos Gerasopoulos reprised his earlier presentation.

The Secretariat Director thanked Mr Gerasopoulos and the Programme Board for the presentation. He drew attention to the point that GEO has already obtained substantial

engagement from the international community on urban resilience, including recognition by UN-Habitat as a major partner. Regarding the concern with resources, Mr Camara noted that Japan would second an expert to the Secretariat on Disaster Risk Reduction and France would send an expert on SDGs. These contributions will free time from the External Relations Manager to continue his support on urban issues. Mr Camera said that the momentum on the issue is too strong and too important to let this opportunity pass by.

China stated that urbanization is a very important issue in their country and so was working to build smart cities that incorporate new technology in planning. China supported the proposal.

South Africa also said that they supported the proposal. There was momentum with partners and resources were already being pledged. GEO should decide to go forward on this, then look at the details of the required resources.

The United States supported the concept and agreed that good progress had been made at the working level, showing the strength of the cross-cutting coordination in the GEO Work Programme. In effect, the Executive Committee would be endorsing what is already being accomplished. This was not a question of significant resources required by the Secretariat. The only reservation was that there is no GEO Plenary this year. The United States suggested that the team put together a strong communications plan and seek endorsement at the Plenary in 2021.

The European Commission agreed that the issue of urban resilience is very important and welcomed the work the Subgroup has been doing, especially the partnership with UN-Habitat. While they had questioned whether the Secretariat would be able to take on an additional priority, they agreed with the approach proposed by the United States that the final step be taken by the Plenary in 2021. The Commission suggested that perhaps a new Flagship activity in the GEO Work Programme on the issue would be warranted. In summary, the Commission agreed to making urban resilience an engagement priority, such to satisfying remaining concerns on resourcing.

Germany fully supported the importance of the issue of urban resilience. The German government supports the UN-Habitat process and supports GEO's engagement in this area, believing that GEO can make a difference. On the other hand, if GEO declares that an issue is a priority, it must be able to deliver. GEO Members need to have a good understanding of what GEO wants to deliver. They agreed with the United States proposal to present an engagement plan on the issue to the Plenary in 2021.

France stated that they supported the position of the European Commission.

China reiterated their support of the Subgroup proposal, noting that Earth observations are important to understanding the urbanization process and that GEO has a great potential to contribute.

Pakistan said that they appreciated the proposal on urban resilience, observing that climate and other factors have caused great damage in their country. They supported the proposal that special focus be given to urbanization.

Mr Gerasopoulos suggested, if the proposal were not accepted at this time, that a strong statement of intent from the Executive Committee.

Outcome: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present:

- Stated their provisional support of urban resilience as a priority, noting the importance of the issue for GEO; and
- Deferred a formal decision on whether to include urban resilience as a fourth engagement priority until the GEO-17 Plenary.

Action 53.1: Programme Board, with support from the Urban Resilience Subgroup and the Secretariat, to present an engagement plan on urban resilience to the Executive Committee. **Due: 54th Executive Committee meeting**.

4.1 Programme Board Membership Slate for 2021 (Presentation by the Secretariat – for endorsement on behalf of Plenary)

Craig Larlee presented the Programme Board slate for 2021. He began by reviewing the relevant requirements of the GEO Rules of Procedure and the criteria used by the Secretariat in formulating a recommendation to the Executive Committee. Mr Larlee reminded GEO Members present of the current Programme Board membership and then reviewed the nominations received for the 2021-2023 terms. The recommended slate of Programme Board members was then presented for approval by the Executive Committee and GEO Members present.

The proposed slate received endorsement from many GEO Members present.

The United States encouraged other GEO Members to engage in GEO Work Programme activities.

Outcome: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present approved the Programme Board slate.

4.2 Update on Implementation of the GEO Knowledge Hub (Presentation by the Secretariat – for discussion)

Douglas Cripe, Senior Scientific Officer in the GEO Secretariat, presented the update on behalf of the GEO Knowledge Hub (GKH) team. Mr Cripe described the GKH as a digital repository for Earth observation applications developed in an open science context. He noted that the Secretariat worked with the GEOSS Infrastructure Development Task Team on the preparation of the GKH implementation plan. The plan was then reviewed and endorsed by the Programme Board before its presentation to the Executive Committee. At its 52nd meeting in July 2020, the Executive Committee approved the implementation of the first phase (July 2020 to July 2021) of development of the GKH. Mr Cripe then reviewed progress of each of the five tasks in the first phase. On task 1, development of a customized digital library based on InvenioRDM, the team was continuing to work with the developers of the Sen2Agri platform to refine how this knowledge package could be presented in the GKH. On task 2, there have been discussions between the GKH team and the GEOSS Platform team regarding integration of the two infrastructures, based on real case scenarios. Mr Cripe noted that a white paper had been circulated by a group of European agencies that presented a view on a possible structure for an overarching GEOSS infrastructure; the GKH team was preparing a response to the paper. On tasks 3 and 4, which address engagement with GEO Work Programme activities and showcasing GEO community resources, the GKH team was had already engaged several GEO Initiatives as well as some developers of the Brazil and

Switzerland data cubes. The team had also scheduled a session with GEO Flagships to look for possible new use cases and to consult them regarding the user interface design. Task 5 involves improvements to the digital library itself, including feedback on the user and knowledge-provider interfaces and other required functionalities; this task will begin in early 2021. Mr Cripe finished by noting the possibility of holding a GEO Data and Knowledge Workshop in the late spring of 2021 at which a fully operational prototype of the GKH could be demonstrated with five complete knowledge packages.

The European Commission said that they were pleased to hear the update, as they had requested at the previous meeting, and were also pleased to see the cooperation with the GEOSS Platform team. Their main objective is to ensure the full and harmonious integration of the GKH with the broader GEOSS infrastructure. The Commission also indicated their support to the implementation plan.

The United Kingdom thanked the GKH team for their efforts and reiterated their support for the initiative. Regarding obtaining user feedback, they asked how capacity building for users might be provided to enable them to interact with the data and create their own analyses.

China recognized the great efforts of the GIDTT members in developing the design of the GKH. They proposed that more concrete use cases be added that align with GEO's engagement priorities so that GEO Members can see the value of the GKH.

The United States concurred with the United Kingdom on the importance of user feedback as a way to gauge the value of the GKH to the global community.

Finland stated that the E-shape project would be interested in feeding into the GKH.

Mr Cripe responded to the United Kingdom by saying that the team was working with the Capacity Development Working Group on the capacity development aspects. In response to the point raised by China, Mr Cripe said that the team is planning to work with GEO Work Programme activities first but would expand to other users over time.

Outcomes:

- The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present supported the development of the GEO Knowledge Hub and thanked the Secretariat for the update;
- The Executive Committee noted the importance of collaboration within the GEOSS Infrastructure Development Task Team (GIDTT) on integrating the GEO Knowledge Hub with other components of the GEOSS infrastructure;
- GEO Members present encouraged the GEO Knowledge Hub team to continue consultations with users and with the Capacity Development Working Group to ensure that the design addresses the needs of GEO Members and other users.

5 SESSION 5: SECRETARIAT OPERATIONS (ON BEHALF OF PLENARY)

5.1 2021 GEO Trust Fund Budget (Document 52.14(Rev1) – for decision on behalf of Plenary)

Trevor Dhu (Australia) presented the document on behalf of the Budget Working Group (BWG). He noted that Australia would likely not be able to continue its participation on

the BWG in 2021 and suggested that the Secretariat take as an action to issue a call for nominations to the BWG. He went on to propose that the confirmation of membership and a call for new BWG members become a routine step following each GEO Plenary. Turning to the budget, Mr Dhu reminding Executive Committee and other GEO Members that the Trust Fund budget is based on the Secretariat Concept of Operations document (ConOps), which provides a clear organizational structure for the Secretariat, outlining the roles and responsibilities of each position. Mr Dhu briefly described the categories and amounts for the various budget lines, noting that the details were contained in the document itself. He concluded by requesting approval of the budget and offered to take questions from GEO Members.

South Africa stated that they approved the budget. They also asked whether the travel portion of the budget had taken into consideration the decrease in travel as compared to normal circumstances. Patricia Geddes, Administration Manager in the Secretariat, responded that a large portion of the travel budget would be required for the GEO Plenary, which it was assumed would take place in 2021. If other parts of the travel budget are not required, some of it could be used to support participation of developing countries in the Plenary.

The United States, Switzerland, the European Commission, Gabon, China, France, Japan, Armenia, Mexico, Koreas, Germany, Ukraine, Russia, Greece, and Sweden indicated their agreement with the proposed budget.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present:

- Approved the GEO Trust Fund Budget, as proposed by the Budget Working Group; and
- Thanked the Budget Working Group for its work and, in particular, thanked Australia for serving as chair in 2020.

Action 53.2: Secretariat to issue a call for members of the Budget Working Group. **Due: 30 November 2020**.

5.2 Resource Mobilization for the GEO Trust Fund (Presentation by the Chair of the Budget Working Group – for discussion)

Trevor Dhu gave a presentation on resource mobilization, also on behalf of the BWG. He noted that GEO benefits from all contributions, including the free, open and timely sharing of Earth observation data, information and knowledge; contributions to the GEO Work Programme; and the development and strengthening of the capacity and capabilities of regional communities. He said that it was important that when discussing contributions to the GEO Trust Fund that these other kinds of contributions not be ignored. That said, it is equally important to understand that the Trust Fund is the vehicle to support the GEO Secretariat to do the work that GEO Members have asked them to do. If the Secretariat is resourced adequately, it is able to act on the issues that GEO Members identify and to enable the GEO community to work effectively together. Mr Dhu noted that while the budget that was just approved is for roughly CHF 5.5 million, the average total annual contributions to the Trust Fund were only CHF 3.2 million. Thus, there is a gap each year of about CHF 2.3 million of work that is unfunded. The aim of the resource mobilization efforts, and the pledge campaign in particular, is to expose the problem to the GEO community and to encourage the broadest range of GEO

Members, Participating Organizations, and others to contribute what they can. Mr Dhu reviewed the contributions for 2021 that had already been pledged, showing that the total was already above CHF 1.5 million. The campaign will continue over the next few months and encouraged all those who are able to make their pledge.

South Africa pledged a contribution of ZAR 3 million to be directed to the Trust Fund and to AfriGEO activities.

Germany stated that they had only heard about the pledge campaign recently and were not in a position to respond. They asked about other outreach activities that are planned. Mr Dhu responded that the pledge campaign would continue for six months. The intent was to use GEO Week 2020 to have discussions with GEO Members.

China announced that they were providing CNY 8 million to projects related to the GEO Work Programme involving research with other countries. The projects are listed in the China Member statement. Other GEO Members can apply to be part of these projects. China GEO is coordinating with the Government of China on their GEO Trust Fund contribution. It is also looking to provide a secondment to the Secretariat.

Mr Dhu thanked China for its contributions to the GEO Work Programme, noting that this is the engine of GEO's work. However, the Secretariat also needs contributions.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present:

- Thanked the Budget Working Group and the Secretariat for their organization of the Pledge Campaign; and
- Encouraged GEO Members and others in the GEO community to contribute to the campaign.

5.3 New GEO Members 2020 (Document 52.14(Rev1) – for decision on behalf of Plenary)

The Secretariat Director informed the Executive Committee and GEO Members present of the new GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and GEO Associates that joined GEO during 2020.

Outcomes: The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present welcomed the following GEO Members, Participating Organizations, and GEO Associates that joined in 2020:

GEO Members	Participating Organizations	GEO Associates
Namibia	Coalition for Rainforest Nations	AmericaView
Nicaragua	Micronesia Conservation Trust	Centre for Spatial Law and Policy
Rwanda	Pan American Institute of Geography and History	Eversis
	Plan4all	Geoterra Image
	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe	Water Youth Network

5.4 Announcement of the Next GEO Secretariat Director

The Chair announced that the next Secretariat Director will be Yana Gevorgyan.

Ms Gevorgyan said that she was thrilled to have been selected for the position. She thanked the Executive Committee for their recognition of her commitment to GEO and for giving her their confidence. She said that she had had the good fortune to be able to shape the GEO that we have today. The most gratifying aspect has been working with the GEO community, creating partnerships and relationships. She promised to build on the legacy of Gilberto Camara and the previous Secretariat Directors and looked forward to the next phase of asking ministers for a new mandate for GEO. To prepare for this, GEO needs to show that GEO Members are realizing the benefits of Earth observations and from their participation in GEO. She said that she wanted to focus on strengthening connections with national GEOs, including by working with the Regional GEOs and the Programme Board.

Gilberto Camara welcomed the decision, saying that Ms Gevorgyan is one of the most committed persons he has met in the GEO community. He congratulated the Executive Committee on their decision. As there will not be a GEO Plenary prior to the end of his term, Mr Camara added some parting thoughts. He stated that he also had wanted to build on the achievements of the previous Directors. He had aimed to bring forward the needs of developing countries and how they might benefit from big data technologies. While important steps in this direction have been made, the transition is not finished. Mr Camara welcomed Ms Gevorgyan as someone who he found to always be helpful and supportive, both as a member of the United States delegation, but also as a friend and advisor. He hoped that together they will achieve a transition to a more inclusive GEO that includes both developed and developing countries.

Outcomes:

- The Chair announced that the next Secretariat Director will be Yana Gevorgyan;
- The Executive Committee and GEO Members present congratulated Ms Gevorgyan on her appointment;
- Ms Gevorgyan thanked the Executive Committee for their recognition of her commitment to GEO and for giving her their confidence.

6 SESSION 6: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2021

6.1 Announcement of the 2021 Lead Co-Chair

The Chair announced that the 2021 GEO Lead Co-Chair will be Patrick Child of the European Commission.

Patrick Child thanked Mr Huang and Mr Li for their strong and effective leadership over what had been a very difficult and challenging year. He also thanked the other Co-Chairs and the Executive Committee members for the pragmatic, flexible, and results-oriented spirit they brought to their work. Mr Child then explained the process the European Commission had in mind for developing the Lead Co-Chair goals and objectives for 2021. Following any input provided this day, the Commission will work with the Secretariat to develop a document that will be circulated to Executive Committee members in December. Taking on inputs and feedback received, a formal document will be prepared

for presentation and approval at the 54th Executive Committee meeting in March 2021. Mr Child then provided an initial perspective on the priorities that are foreseen, noting the likely continued relevance of the response to COVID-19. He noted that urban resilience would likely be a significant component based on the discussion earlier in the day. Regarding the development of GEOSS, Mr Child stated that the Commission would like to emphasize linkages to in situ data systems and secondly the integration of the GEO Knowledge Hub with existing components of the GEOSS infrastructure. On engagement of the commercial sector, Mr Child recognized the progress that had been made thus far, principally with the engagement of some of the larger actors in Earth observations, the Commission would like to broaden and diversify commercial sector engagements internationally, especially with small, medium and micro-sized establishments. The engagement of developing countries will continue to be a key issue, noting specifically that with Pacific Island Countries and Territories. The Commission also supports intensification of efforts to obtain additional resources for GEO, including the pledge campaign, to ensure that the burden of supporting the work of GEO is spread as broadly and fairly as possible. Lastly, Mr Child recognized the importance of supporting a smooth transition to the new Secretariat Director, noting his appreciation for the energy, passion, and enthusiasm Mr Camara brought to GEO. He also provided his personal congratulations to the selection of Ms Gevorgyan, noting that her tenure would be a crucial phase for GEO.

Outcomes:

- The Chair announced that the 2021 GEO Lead Co-Chair will be Patrick Child of the European Commission; and
- Mr Child outlined his plan for the development of the 2021 Lead Co-Chair Goals and Objectives.

Action 53.3: European Commission to distribute a draft of the Lead Co-Chair Goals and Objectives for 2021. **Due: 18 December 2020**.

Following distribution of the draft, Executive Committee members will have an opportunity to provide comments. A revised version of the document will be presented to the 54th Executive Committee meeting for approval.

6.2 Executive Committee Membership Slate for 2021

The Chair presented the list of Executive Committee members for 2021.

Africa	**CIS**	**Europe**
Republic of South Africa*	Armenia	European Commission*
Ghana	Russian Federation	Germany
Senegal	**Asia-Oceania**	Greece
Americas	China*	France
United States*	Australia	
Chile	Japan	*indicates Co-Chair
Peru	Korea	

Outcomes:

- The Chair presented the list of Executive Committee members for 2021;
- The Executive Committee and other GEO Members present thanked the departing members Italy and Switzerland and welcomed the new members Germany and Greece.

6.3 Dates for the 54th and 55th Executive Committee Meetings and GEO Week 2021

Patricia Geddes presented a set of proposed dates for the 54th and 55th Executive Committee meetings and for GEO Week 2021. She noted that the date for the GEO Plenary is later than usual due to the planned Conference of the Parties for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Outcomes:

The Executive Committee approved the following dates for

- The 54th Executive Committee meeting will be held 16-17 March 2021;
- The 55th Executive Committee meeting will be held 6-7 July 2021;
- GEO Week 2021 will take place in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, 22-27 November.

7 SESSION 7: ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS

7.1 Any Other Business

No other items were raised.

7.2 Review of Action Items

Executive Committee members reviewed and approved the outcomes and actions from the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 16:00