



**Committee on
Earth Observation Satellites**

Report on Group on Earth Observations Programme Board activities in 2017

by the 2017 CEOS representatives to the GEO Programme Board

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The Programme Board (PB) is starting to hit its stride. The final meeting for 2017, held in late August, was nicely structured and productive across a range of important topics.

In terms of representation, the member states present at meetings tend to be from the most developed countries. This is certainly something that needs attention. The PB needs a broader participation than that if it is going to work effectively, particularly given the areas of strategic focus that GEO has adopted. Nominations for 1/3 of the positions occur each year, which provides potential for this issue to be ameliorated through targeted selection of nominees. CEOS has two years remaining to run on its current PB term - both on the PB and as observer to ExCom – before it will need to consider whether to renominate or not.

One of the tasks for the PB in 2017 was managing incremental changes to the three year GEO work programme, which is a living document. As expected, given it is only one year since the full three year work programme was endorsed by GEO Plenary, there were not a significant number of changes made.

The PB has also been having discussions about what it may want from any future GEO Symposia (e.g. GEO Work Programme Symposia). A theme emerging is how more targeted symposia could be used to progress GEO's objectives in areas where there are gaps and issues. A more targeted approach, with symposia focussed on specific themes, could be more likely to attract relevant non-GEO people than a meeting where the topic of relevance to them is only half an hour or an hour out of multiple days. It may also help avoid the symptom of 'talking to ourselves', which can be evident at GEO meetings. Example 'gaps' where such an approach could be valuable discussed to date are climate adaptation activities and exploitation of EO for transport. In regards to the latter, there are currently no work programme activities contributing to this societal benefit area. It is important to note that discussions have also recognised the value of having an event that brings the GEO community together to ensure sharing of information and identification of opportunities to link activities together.

There is also now recognition within the PB that its 'startup phase' is over. The PB needs to now be more proactive at stewarding the work programme – move on from acting as quality assurance on what bubbles up from the community, and getting involved in addressing gaps and issues, and mobilising resources. On this topic, CEOS PB representatives have made the point that some of the

'global' initiatives that are bubbling up may lack the comprehensive engagement from key global actors that they require to be successful, even if the technical content may be good.

The PB has also recognised that a lot of focus has been on the Sustainable Development Goals as a strategic focus, of necessity, but that the other two of the 'big three', the Paris Climate Agreement and Sendai Framework now need more attention. In relation to the latter, the work of the CEOS-led GEO-DARMA will be an important strategic orientation point for the broader GEO community.

Although a seemingly minor point, efforts to restructure the format of the Work Programme document itself have delivered significant improvements to readability. These changes, such as putting Flagships first (rather than right at the end as in previous iterations), and providing multiple indexes allowing a reader to find relevant activities by Societal Benefit Area and Sustainable Development Goal, will make it more attractive for those new to the GEO world.

Overall, the sense of the 2017 CEOS representatives to the PB is that the PB itself, and the CEOS engagement in it, are going well and we are confident that the transition to the next set of CEOS representatives will be smooth.