

**CEOS SDG-AHT Information Note   
to CEOS Principals for CEOS 33rd Plenary**

***1 October 2019   
Prepared by the CEOS SDG-AHT co-leads   
in consultation with the GEO EO4SDG Executive Secretary***

**The CEOS SDG-AHT invites the CEOS Principals at the CEOS 33rd Plenary**

* **to approve the renewal of an additional and final year of extension to the CEOS Ad-Hoc Team on SDGs**.
* **to express their support to the implementation of the new CEOS 2020-2021 Workplan on SDGs, which is provided for information, and indicate the level of resources they are ready to assign on the CEOS work plan activities related to the three SDG indicators proposed at SIT-34 (Water related Ecosystems, Sustainable Urbanization, Land Degradation Neutrality)**
* **to designate CEOS Agencies’ staff who can participate to the AHT sub-teams as leads or contributors.**
* **to consider the possibility to designate new co-leads of the SDG-AHT for the upcoming year, in agreement with the AHT leadership rotation of the SDG-AHT Terms of Reference.**

This final annual renewal of the CEOS Ad-Hoc Team on SDGs will allow CEOS to continue its collaboration with GEO on the SDGs with a mid-term vision, while preparing the transfer of its activities in a new work organization that will be proposed for approval at the CEOS 34th Plenary, in October 2020, including the possibility to transfer some activities outside of CEOS.

The mid-term vision of the CEOS activities on SDGs is described in a 2-year workplan called “**CEOS 2020-2021 Workplan on SDGs”,** which is provided for information to the CEOS principals**.** The 2-year workplan has been developed as a flexible plan of activities that will be transferred after one year - which means at the end of the lifecycle of the SDG-AHT - into the new CEOS structure on SDGs that will be decided at CEOS 34 Plenary.

Pending on this approval, the Ad-hoc Team will use CEOS Agencies’ best efforts to continue supporting the United Nations through the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) to mainstream Earth Observation in the national processes and systems on SDGs, **starting with** **three primary SDG indicators** which are amongst the most readyto integrate EO in their production workflows, but for which they are still some data, methodological and capacity issues to be addressed:

* SDG 6.6.1 on water-related ecosystems   
  (change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time)
* SDG 11.3.1 on sustainable urbanization   
  (ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate)
* SDG 15.3.1 on land degradation neutrality   
  (proportion of land that is degraded over total land area)

**The request for extension is justified by a number of unknowns**, both internal and external to CEOS, which the Ad-Hoc Team will need to address in order to decide how CEOS should best organize itself on the long term in order to facilitate the adoption of EO solutions in the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, maximizing CEOS impact and overall benefits:

* Unknowns external to CEOS relate mainly to the new GEO federated approach on SDGs and associated workflows, which the GEO EO4SDG initiative started to define following their annual meeting in August 2019, and which will include a more precise role for CEOS.
* Unknowns internal to CEOS relate essentially to the decisions that will be taken at the 33rd CEOS Plenary (Oct. 2019), following the assessment report of the CEOS Working Group Study Team (WGST) and the discussions held during the 2019 CEOS SIT Technical Workshop (Sep. 2019) on the changes to the CEOS internal processes to better respond to user communities’ requests, including the SDGs.

**The CEOS 2020-2021 Work Plan on SDGs** has been developed with the necessary flexibility to allow the SDG-AHT to continue his work on SDGs with a detailed plan of work, while preparing the roll-out of the Ad-Hoc Team in an organizational structure that would optimize the use of CEOS Agencies’ resources along the unique role that CEOS should play as a coordination body of Space Agencies’ efforts on SDGs. The 2-year workplan allows to have a mid-term vision that goes beyond the lifetime of the Ad-Hoc team, while focusing the 2020 CEOS activities on the 3 primary SDG indicators, in agreement with GEO EO4SDG and the Working Group on Geospatial Information (WGGI) from the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs)

The following **priority criteria** have been used by the SDG-AHT to streamline the CEOS engagement on SDGs and determine the key activities and deliverables that CEOS should conduct and produce**:**

* The CEOS activities on SDGs must **focus on the unique role that CEOS should play** as a coordination body of the Space Agencies.
* The CEOS activities on SDGs must serve the **interest of CEOS and offer tangible benefits to all CEOS Agencies**.
* The **permanent CEOS entities (WGs, VCs, SEO) must be involved** in order to leverage expertise, and maximize resource and overall benefits.
* The CEOS activities on SDGs must **complement rather than duplicate the GEO community efforts** on SDGs led by the GEO EO4SDG initiative.
* The CEOS activities on SDGs must be **connected to the SDG processes in place in the UN** (e.g. IAEG-SDGs WGGI and UN Custodian Agencies).
* The CEOS activities on SDGs and deliverables must be **embedded in the GEO Federated Approach on SDGs and related workflows**.

The CEOS activities on SDGs and deliverables must be **commensurate with the resources available in CEOS** to deliver as planned.

Based on the above priority criteria, the SDG-AHT proposes to **focus the CEOS engagement on SDGs along 6 main activity lines**, which are detailed in the 2020-2021 workplan with a clear set of deliverables and associated timelines:

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| # | SDG Activity Title | SDG Activity Description | support |
| 1 | **Satellite Data Requirements** | * Compilation of the satellite data requirements for the production of SDG indicators, including satellite data coverage, satellite data continuity and availability of satellite ARD. | LSI-VC |
| 2 | **EO Enabling Infrastructures** | * Review of the EO-enabling infrastructures (software tools and EO platforms) available in CEOS and individual agencies and which can facilitate the EO uptake by SDG stakeholders. * Development of a CEOS SDG Community Portal for discovery of and access to satellite ARD and EO data sets for SDG indicators. | WGISS  SEO  WGISS |
| 3 | **EO Awareness and Capacity Building** | * Capacity Building on advanced satellite-based methodologies for SDG indicators (including use of EO enabling infrastructures). | WGCapD  WGISS |
| 4 | **EO Good Practices Guidance** | * Collection of EO best practices on SDGs available in CEOS agencies and production of good practice guidelines. * R&D agenda for improved EO methods in response to data or methodological gaps. | LSI-VC (on the use of CARD4L) |
| 5 | **EO Demonstration Use Cases** | * Collection of EO showcases for SDG monitoring and reporting, undertaken by CEOS agencies in partnership with UN agencies and/or national authorities. * Customization of CEOS ODC workflows (in whole or in part) for SDG indicator monitoring. | SEO |
| 6 | **EO Quality Standards** | * Development of quality standards on the use of EO satellite data in the SDG global indicator framework and production of validation good practices. | WGCV (LPV) |

The 6 CEOS activity lines on SDGs have been classified in two categories:

* **Primary activities** which are to be considered as the main activities that shall be conducted by the SDG-AHT, without the need to create dedicated sub-teams on each indicator. The primary activities include the analysis of the satellite data requirements, the review of the EO enabling Infrastructures and the organization of awareness / capacity building events.
* **Secondary activities** which include some tasks and deliverables that require the set-up of dedicated expert teams from the CEOS agencies on each of the 3 primary indicators (Water, Urban and Land Degradation). The secondary activities include the production of EO Good Practice Guidance, the demonstration cases and the development of quality standards.

In order to optimize the resources available in CEOS and maximize the quality of delivery, the SDG-AHT proposes, for the first year of the 2020-2021 workplan, to **organize the SDG activities** **in 6 sub-teams (3 transversal sub-teams and 3 thematic sub-teams)** with well-defined roles and responsibilities on the 3 primary indicators:

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| # | AHT sub-teams | Sub-team role and responsibilities |
| 1 | **Satellite Data Requirements** | Coordinate the review of the satellite data requirements for the production of the SDG indicators. |
| 2 | **EO Enabling Infrastructures** | Coordinate the review of the EO Enabling Infrastructures, with the support of the thematic sub-teams for the platforms & tools specific to the subject indicators. |
| 3 | **Capacity Building** | Contribute the GEO/CEOS joint capacity building on advanced satellite-based solutions for SDG indicators. |
| 4 | **LDN sub-team** | Lead the thematic activities on indicator 15.3.1 (EO Good Practices Guidance, R&D agenda, EO Demonstration Cases, Quality standards). |
| 5 | **Urban sub-team** | Lead the thematic activities on indicator 11.3.1 (EO Good Practices Guidance, R&D agenda, EO Demonstration Cases, Quality standards). |
| 6 | **Water sub-team** | Lead the thematic activities on indicator 6.6.1 (EO Good Practices Guidance, R&D agenda, EO Demonstration Cases, Quality standards). |

Each of the sub-teams will organize themselves and include several CEOS Agencies, with a lead or co-leads, active contributors and deliverables assigned to them. At a minimum, it is expected that each sub-team consists of a minimum number of 3 CEOS Agencies.

The level of efforts required to contribute to the work of each of the sub-teams is estimated to be in the order of 1 to 2 weeks of work per year (max 5% of staff time), depending on the individual responsibilities within the sub-team and on the deliverables to be produced.

**The CEOS Principals are kindly invited to express their support to the implementation of the CEOS 2020-2021 workplan on SDGs and to designate Agencies’ staff who can participate to the AHT sub-teams as leads or contributors**. Agencies who already confirmed their participation are indicated in the workplan.

The CEOS 2020-2021 workplan on SDGs will be updated after CEOS 33 plenary to reflect the level of resources available in each of the sub-teams to conduct the activities planned.

The Ad-Hoc Team has been an effective vehicle of CEOS to address the emerging topic of the Sustainable Development Goals, which could not be dealt with the existing VCs and WGs. The SDG-AHT has analyzed the various options regarding the lifecycle of the AHT and the transfer of its activities in a more permanent structure within and outside of CEOS. A brief analysis of the different options with pros and cons is provided in the **CEOS Engagement Plan on SDGs**, which is available to the CEOS principals as an information document.

Considering that the SDGs is one of the 3 priorities of the incoming SIT Chair with ARD and Carbon/Biomass, **the AHT has retained 2 possible evolution options**:

* An SDG Strategy (cross-cutting activity following the “Carbon Strategy” path) with a coordination body and a work plan that allocate SDG activities into existing CEOS resources (VCs, WGs, SEO)
* A permanent Working Group, with a governance system, work plan and reporting mechanisms, and more sustained efforts and commitment/support from CEOS Agencies and WGs/VCs to implement it.

The SDG-AHT will further analyse the feasibility and sustainability of the 2 options, while taking account of the new GEO federated approach on SDGs and the results of the Working Group Study Team (WGST), which both will be available by the fall of 2019. At SIT 35 in April 2020, the SDG-AHT will propose a way forward to the CEOS principals which, pending approval by CEOS SIT, will be further developed by the Ad-Hoc Team in order to come with a firm and solid proposal at CEOS 34 Plenary in October 2020.

The Terms of Reference of the SDG-AHT includes the possibility to have a rotation of its co-leads at the end of each year. **The SDG-AHT co-leads (ESA, CSIRO) invite the CEOS Principals to consider the possibility to designate new co-leads for the upcoming year**, with a preference to have co-leads from the 3 parts of the world (Americas, Europe+Africa and Asia+Australia. In case there is no candidate to substitute or complement the current leadership of the Ad-Hoc Team, the current co-leads agree to continue to coordinate the AHT activities on a best effort basis for this final year.

**CEOS Principals are kindly invited to endorse the proposed way forward on the SDG-AHT life cycle.**