

**CEOS Formal Statement to the  
Twelfth Plenary Session of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO-XII)  
by Dr. Alex Held, 2015 CEOS Chair Representative  
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)**

Link to [CEOS Statement at GEO-XI Plenary](#)

**Mister Chairman**, Distinguished Guests, on behalf of the Chair of the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS), it is my pleasure to provide you with the formal statement of CEOS engagement and contributions to GEO. It is an honour for me to give this statement, coming as it does at the closing of one decade of the important CEOS-GEO relationship, and the dawning of an exciting new one.

CEOS, through the major sustained investments made by its **fifty-five** Member and Associate Agencies, continues to develop the space segment of the GEOSS and coordinates the availability of space-based Earth observations to GEO.

As of November 2015, CEOS Agencies had over 130 Earth observation satellites in orbit. Through CEOS, these Agencies work together to ensure sustained international coordination of these assets and the data they produce with the aim of delivering as much societal benefit as possible.

Through these activities, CEOS provides significant support to GEO at all levels. CEOS implements the space segment of the GEOSS and is the most prolific data provider. CEOS has been a major player in successful 'Flagship' initiatives like Blue Planet, GFOI and GEOGLAM. In 2015, CEOS led and contributed to almost 50% of the Tasks and Components of the 2012-2015 GEO Work Plan. Our contribution to new 2016 Work Programme is also going to be significant with direct participation in 60% of the candidate initiatives likely to form the first tranche of flagships, 30% of other candidate initiatives, and community activities across diverse topics.

As much as we often like to talk about the significant contribution we make to GEO activity, as the recognised 'space arm' of GEO, we also want to clearly express our appreciation of GEO.

CEOS relies on close partnerships with international user bodies, service providers, government and international agencies, and others, to ensure its efforts are linked with important international agendas and critical user needs. We therefore support strongly and value the convening power of GEO, providing an opportunity for efficient and effective interactions between data providers, such as space agencies, and decision makers in a single forum.

It is with pleasure that I can state that at the 29<sup>th</sup> CEOS Plenary held last week in Kyoto, CEOS Plenary expressed its support for the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025*. CEOS Agencies acknowledged the many opportunities CEOS was given to express its views as the document developed, and thanked the IPWG for taking these views on board in a number of areas.

CEOS Agencies were particularly pleased to see that CEOS input helped shape the Core Functions, as they will help GEO be outcome-focused and measure its impact on the world. CEOS looks forward to working closely with GEO as the underlying indicators and targets are refined and developed. It is critical they provide an accurate holistic understanding of GEO's performance, as well as giving a sound view of which parts are working well and which need further support.

CEOS Agencies also highlighted two other areas in the new Strategic Plan.

Firstly, CEOS Agencies noted the emphasis now placed on the important and unique role that GEO plays in connecting and convening players along the Earth observation value chain. CEOS will be looking to GEO to significantly increase efforts in this area, and sees the coming months as key in more clearly defining and communicating the value proposition GEO offers these groups in order to foster a greater interest in partnerships.

Secondly, CEOS Agencies warmly welcomed the major emphasis GEO will place on the definition of authoritative and clearly prioritized user requirements. This will greatly support CEOS's efforts to work systematically to implement a space segment that provides sustained and comprehensive observations of all aspects of the Earth system.

CEOS Agencies further expressed their commitment to build on CEOS' significant existing contribution to the work of GEO at a practical level, and to expand it over time. CEOS will take leadership on the dedicated foundational 'space task' that features in the new GEO Work Programme. CEOS will also play a key role in the new GEO-DARMA disaster risk reduction initiative, which responds to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030; work with GEO to support implementation of monitoring frameworks for the Global Goals for Sustainable Development; and implement our comprehensive and strategic response to the GEO Water Strategy.

CEOS Agencies also expressed their desire to embrace the increased opportunities to contribute to the leadership and governance of GEO offered by the next decade. CEOS is appreciative of the opportunity to serve on the new Programme Board and is willing to support GEO further by being nominated to one of the Observer seats to be made available on ExCom for Participating Organizations. CEOS sees these as important avenues to increase its contribution to GEO.

However, as we noted in our intervention on the Rules of Procedure, CEOS Agencies unanimously expressed strong concern over the specific rules proposed for the Programme Board and Participating Organization involvement in GEO's Executive Committee. The proposed rules are practically unworkable, and will make it difficult to assure continuity and representation at an appropriate level.

As we suggested in our intervention, we suggest that a more suitable approach would be to:

- Clearly state in the Rules of Procedure that nominees are expected to take a whole-of-GEO perspective rather than representing only the interests of the nominating body.
- Define criteria for suitable nominees to each body, ensuring that these criteria require that nominees come from a cross-section of Members and Participating Organizations that represents the full breadth and diversity of GEO interests.
- Allow a nominating body to adopt the necessary internal procedures to ensure those criteria are met at specific meetings, as well to manage continuity over time.

We hope that this matter, which will have significant impact on mechanisms critical to the success of GEO, but which requires only minor adjustments to resolve, can be addressed at this meeting.

Because CEOS Agencies strongly believe in the convening power of GEO; that the next decade of GEO will build upon the accomplishments of the last decade; and that the *GEO Strategic Plan 2016-2025* lays a strong foundation for future success. We encourage all existing, and potential, GEO participants and partners to work together to implement that Strategic Plan and make that success a reality.

We, as CEOS, as the 'space arm' of GEO, will do our part. Thank you.