

Interim Report of the Post-2025 Working Group

This document is presented to the 18th Plenary for discussion

The Post-2025 Working Group was established at the 57th Executive Committee meeting in March 2022 to develop strategic recommendations for the future evolution of GEO.

This interim report is provided to the Executive Committee, the Plenary and GEO stakeholders for information on the current considerations by the Working Group, and to invite additional feedback as part of on-going community engagement, inter alia, during the GEO Week in Accra, Ghana from 31 October – 4 November 2022. The next report of the Working Group will be presented to the Executive Committee in March 2023 and the final recommended GEO Post-2025 Strategy will be made available in September 2023 to serve as information basis for discussions on the renewal of the GEO mandate at the 19th GEO Plenary and the Ministerial Summit in 2023.

The Working Group is made up of 28 members selected based on the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion from within the GEO community. The list of Working Group members is exhibited in Annex 1. The Working Group met virtually on 31 May, 11-12 July and 30-31 August, and in-person in Geneva 20-21 September 2022.

In parallel, the Working Group with support from the GEO Secretariat, has been engaged in a consultative process with a wide range of stakeholders to take into account the diversity of views on the evolution of GEO beyond 2025. To date, the engagement included consultations at AmeriGEO Week 2022, the 24th GEO Programme Board meeting, the September Technical Workshop of the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites, AOGEO Symposium 2022, and a GEO House Event with organizations co-located in the WMO building. Engagement sessions are planned with AfriGEO during GEO Week 2022 and with EuroGEO during EuroGEO event in December 2022.

ROAD TO GEO POST-2025

1 CONTEXT

The intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is a global partnership of governments and partner organizations working to meet the need for timely, quality and long-term global environmental information as a basis for sound decision-making.

Since its creation in 2005, GEO has played an important role in advancing the sharing of open Earth observation information, enhancing coordination and integration with other data, and fostering collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders. GEO has inspired the creation of regional and local groups, which have enriched the GEO vision and mission with their activities, contributing significantly to building a large global network. The GEO network has also developed specific tools to assist countries with sustainable development planning, such as through risk forecasts, and crop and forest monitoring.

1.1 CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Looking ahead to a post-2025 GEO, it is striking how the global landscape has changed since 2005. With extreme weather events occurring more frequently, and environmental and societal challenges on the rise, it has never been more important to have access to trusted Earth observation information for timely action. There has been an explosion of new players in the field in recent years—including in academia, research, and the private sector—all rapidly transforming the business model of data generation, integration and application. However, the abundance of information and information sources in the marketplace has not necessarily led to greater access to, and wider and effective use of, Earth observation information. Accelerating equitable access to, and making the use of, science-based earth observations for critically important decisions at the local, regional and global level remains a challenge. Against this context, the GEO partnership must evolve to remain relevant.

The Working Group drew on its own wealth of knowledge and experience with GEO and in combination with the extensive stakeholder consultations began to identify factors that might help accelerate the transition of GEO into the future.

1.2 EVOLVING VALUE PROPOSITION

The GEO Mid-Term Evaluation 2021 is a key source of valuable information with respect to the accomplishments and shortcomings to-date. The Mid-Term Evaluation challenged GEO to [re]define its value proposition, considering a vastly different landscape today. On the supply side, a rich and robust commercial sector participates in rapid research and development and delivery of operational services and solutions to multiple sectors, including climate and weather, sustainability and environment, agriculture, and insurance. On the demand side, the business and finance sectors are increasingly turning to environmental intelligence to understand risks and report on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance.

In redefining the GEO value proposition, the partnership will be well served by the guidance set out in the evaluation, which points to the need to identify specific areas where

GEO can best provide added value. Examining the strategic gap(s) that GEO is best positioned to bridge, with a more fit-for-purpose partnership, will be a key element of the next phase of the development of the GEO Post-2025 Strategy.

The Post-2025 Working Group process is an important opportunity for GEO to take stock, review and ultimately propose an evolution of GEO into a modern, fit-for-purpose vehicle: well-equipped, organized and financed to provide service to the world.

2 INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GEO POST-2025

Given the urgent need to facilitate timely and informed decisions, and recognizing that equitable access to and effective use of Earth observation is more critical than ever, we have adopted the mindset that business as usual is not an option and thus put forward the following initial considerations towards shaping the GEO Post-2025 Strategy:

- *Increase Equitable Access to Earth Observations*: Mandate the GEO Secretariat to explore mechanisms, including innovative financing options, to acquire and reassign to vulnerable communities and low- and middle-income countries multi-user-licenses for in-demand geo-spatial and other earth observation information;
- *Optimize the GEO Work Programme*: Consider adopting a work programme process that focuses on a limited number of prioritized areas of high strategic importance to the world and develops large-scale integrated activities based on additionality, efficiency, effectiveness and impact;
- *Strengthen GEO Governance*: Taking into account the changed landscape in earth observations, consider including representation of all major constituencies in GEO decision-making bodies, creating a truly inclusive global partnership with the highest levels of accountability, transparency and resource mobilization potential;
- *Mobilize New Donors, Private Sector and Innovative Financing*: Mandate the GEO Secretariat to develop and implement a resource mobilization strategy for increased engagement of current and new government donors, explore opportunities for private sector support and innovative financing mechanisms to fund GEO's work;
- *Strengthen Communications and Advocacy*: Mandate the GEO Secretariat to develop and implement an innovative integrated GEO communications and advocacy campaign, linked to the above resource mobilization strategy. Consider convening periodic flagship event or conference on the state of the earth observations, attracting governments, industry, academia, research organizations, civil society, youth organizations, philanthropies and the financial sector to promote cohesiveness and coherence in scientific knowledge, policy and investments. Consider publishing *State of Earth Observations Report*, an annual global GEO landmark report on the state of earth observations, highlighting new developments, policy analysis, network collaborations, tools, gaps and barriers, and case studies.

ANNEX 1

Members of the post-2025 Working Group

Faten Attig-Bahar	Future Earth	Science
Yuqi Bai	Tsinghua University	China
Birendra Bajracharya	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)	Regional
Raphaelle Barbier	Mines Paris Tech	France
Rosamond Bing	Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources	Tonga
Nadia Bood	WWF-Belize	Belize
Marie-Josée Bourassa	CEOS	Canada
Samantha Burgess	ECMWF, Copernicus Services	Regional
Betty Charalampopoulou	European Association for Remote Sensing Companies (EARSC)	Private Sector
Mark Dowell	European Commission, Joint Research Center	Regional
Rebecca Firth	Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT)	Humanitarian Aid
Matt Foote	Insurance Development Forum or WTW	Insurance Sector
Adina Gillespie	World Geospatial Industry Council (WGIC)	Private Sector
Angelica Gutierrez	AmeriGEO	Regional
Mohammad Hassan	Federal Center for Statistics and Competitiveness	United Arab Emirates
Melanie Hutchinson	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs	United Kingdom
Daniel Juhn	Conservation International	Earth Observation for Ecosystem Accounting
Jie Liu	Center of Big Data for Sustainable Development Goals (CBAS)	China
Katy Matthews	NOAA	United States of America
Jean-Baptiste Migraine	WMO	Global / UN
Amadou Moctar Dieye	Centre de Suivi Ecologique (CSE)	Senegal
Humbulani Mudau	Department of Science and Technology	South Africa
Osamu Ochiai	JAXA	Japan
David Patterson	WWF	Sustainable Finance
James Rattling Leaf	GEO Indigenous Alliance	Indigenous Peoples

Alejandro Román	Paraguay Space Agency	Paraguay
Jonathan Ross	Geoscience Australia	Australia
Cécile Thomas-Courcoux	Mercator Ocean International, Copernicus	Regional
Yana Gevorgyan	GEO Secretariat (ex officio)	GEO Secretariat