

August 2024

Subject: CEOS Chair 2024 Priorities on Biodiversity – Outcomes and Recommendations

Purpose

This document serves two main purposes: its broader intent is to be the preliminary repository of the outcomes and recommendations stemming from the 2 years of CEOS discussions around our role in biodiversity in the future, but its immediate purpose is to guide and support SIT TW and Plenary side meeting discussions with the goal to arrive at a version to be presented to CEOS Principals for decisions.

In essence, this document, once finalised, will capture the results of the work on the CEOS Chair 2024 priorities agreed to at Plenary 2023 in Thailand but initiated with the EETT in 2022. Therefore, the following paragraphs are meant to support discussions among CEOS SEC, among the EETT as well as broader considerations by CEOS members in preparation for the SIT TW and the subsequent Plenary.

More precisely, the EETT, CEOS SEC and CEOS SIT Chair team should discuss the tasks that are proposed for the “Biodiversity study team”, tasks that have a short-term horizon and seek to continue to progress on concrete inputs to the global collaboration. The CEOS SEC and CEOS SIT Chair Team should refine the proposed evolution of the EETT in a study team for the next 1-2 years as well as allocate tasks to prepare a full proposal for an eventual working group. Lastly, CEOS SEC with help from the EETT should refine the next steps in CEOS engagement with the various Biodiversity actors.

Introduction/Context

CEOS Chair Team 2024 in collaboration with an impressive collection of individuals from CEOS members’ organisations set out to explore how EO could contribute in addressing or responding to the biodiversity crisis and the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework. In support of this goal, the EETT developed a first report and supported the work on three demonstrators that would make best possible use of available EO data. The Chair team expressed priorities for 2024 as to touch two important aspects to determine how CEOS will proceed in the future with respect to biodiversity. One pertained to the need to develop and strengthen our relationships with other international organisations involved with the biodiversity user community while the second was inward facing in proposing a structure that would adequately serve CEOS members in their continuing efforts to have EO contribute to the global challenge on biodiversity.

The thinking has benefitted from feedback from CEOS principals and teams over the last year. Although there is general support to take action, there was a strong expression for the need to clarify what actions would we first take. In short, there is a need to know what we our committing ourselves to even in a best-effort collaboration.

The proposed path forward is therefore divided in three parts: 1) CEOS Governance where a structured approach for the next 1-2 years and steps to support a more permanent solution are presented, 2) the tasks that we would ask the “study team” to take on during these 1-2 years and, 3) the tasks to continue to engage with the different international players in biodiversity.

1. CEOS governance – CEOS Chair proposal

Discussions to date have ranged from the need to create the EETT to its transition into a VC or WG. While there seems to be a general support for an eventual working group to be assigned the biodiversity responsibility, there is a clear request for a better definition of the work to be assigned to this potential working group as well as the need for a more formal proposal to allow CEOS Principals to make their assessment and ascertain support for the idea or formulate an alternative.

A consensus on the need to address biodiversity within CEOS was established through the many consultations that led to the crafting of the CEOS Chair 2024 priorities. Additional time is required to submit a detailed proposal for a potential working group to orchestrate CEOS’ response to UNCBD request for support in implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework. Accepting these statements, it is therefore proposed to have a CEOS team work on specific actions (see section 2 of this document) during the next 1-2 years.

There are three approaches to the creation of this team: extending the EETT, creating a new team or evolving the EETT. Extending the EETT may be the simplest of the three approaches, but this team was composed with a very specific focus on ecosystem extent where the task at hand needs to go beyond and could well require a different composition. Creating a new team brings additional delays in tackling the tasks as well as the need for CEOS members to confirm perhaps new representatives. The more elegant approach seems to be the evolution of the EETT into a study team, effectively keeping members of the EETT that can continue through expertise and availability and adding potential new contributors based on the work defined.

Creation of CEOS Biodiversity Study Team

- Transition approach to continue CEOS contributions
- Allows time to submit a detailed working group proposal for consideration
- Maintains momentum of EETT
- Allows adjustment to team composition to address short term tasks and scope beyond ecosystem extent

Actions

- a. CEOS Principals agreement with approach
- b. Finalize this document for Plenary
- c. Identify, confirm membership (CSA willing to participate, even co-chair)
- d. CEOS Principals agreement to assess an eventual working group proposal
- e. Potentially approve WG Biodiversity at 2025 or 2026 Plenary (Canada offering to Chair for the first 2 years)

2. CEOS Biodiversity Study Team – CEOS Chair Proposal

The creation of the CEOS Biodiversity Study Team seeks to achieve two objectives: to carry out concrete actions in support of the global biodiversity framework implementation and to provide time and information for CEOS to assess the necessity of a working group on biodiversity. As a short-term and transitional measure, the CEOS Biodiversity Study Team needs to be assigned specific tasks and deliverables.

Actions, tasks, and deliverables:

- a. Identify missions that can contribute to biodiversity
 - i. An understanding of currently available data/products would be beneficial
 - ii. Define specifically what type of satellite data would be needed for **GET** level 3 – provide additional detail on not just extent but condition and change.
 - iii. Define specifically what type of satellite data would be needed for specific EBVs – provide additional detail on where satellite data does not help with developing a data product but can be used to identify where data collection needed to occur.
 - iv. On the above, provide guidance on which satellites have the above information, what public data is available and what are the use cases where a country may want to buy satellite data.
- b. Pull together guidance for countries looking to understand how to invest in their monitoring systems – I think a decision try with demos/pilots would be useful. For example, for question X, here is what you might want to do.”
- c. Define structure that communicates potential contributions of missions to users
- d. Identify CEOS contributions to external existing projects (e.g. GEO Maldives pilot, how EO data can be connected to Global Ecosystem Atlas, GEO BON Tools, etc)
- e. Identify, in collaboration with WGCapD, examples of educational tools needed by national users
- f. Draft CEOS response to UNCBD request for support to implement GBF
- g. Develop, in collaboration with CEO, the documentation in support of the creation of a WG Biodiversity
- h. Propose workplan activities and eventual WG Biodiversity tasks

3. CEOS International Collaboration on Biodiversity – CEOS Chair Proposal

CEOS Members recognized the importance of engagement with other international organisations to coordinate efforts in responding to the biodiversity crisis but also to improve our understanding of the biodiversity user community needs if Space-based EO is to contribute effectively.

CSA, being co-located with UNCBD and GEO BON, saw an opportunity to take on the challenge and lead CEOS efforts in formalising relationships with different international groups. This engagement is crucial to the future global efforts on biodiversity and nature restoration actions. Engagement must continue beyond CSA's chair year. Therefore CSA is determined to continue to play a role in the engagement effort and take advantage of the geographical proximity of the major biodiversity actors. It is however a collective effort as many CEOS members already have biodiversity initiatives and relationships at different levels that can be leveraged to ensure good coordination and exchange of information.

It is proposed to have the CEOS SEC and CEO in collaboration with the proposed Biodiversity Study Team, maintain and strengthen the relationships.

Actions:

- a. Review and refine the Joint Dialogue takeaways in concrete actions
- b. Refine, if needed, the areas of collaborations as discussions progress
- c. Contribute to a joint communication expressing the collective desire to collaborate of the different organisations (led by UNCBD)
- d. Establish and test engagement mechanisms for regular exchange of information and updates between organisations (proposed minimum of twice yearly by the participants)
- e. Establish different layers of engagement (e.g. regional expert centers of UNCBD)
- f. Determine collective approach to labelling ecosystems
- g. Define interfaces between different activities and tools and associated responsibilities