

Ministerial Guidance on the Evolution of GEOSS

In this Session, Ministers are asked to provide guidance regarding the development of the next GEOSS Implementation Plan. A draft Plan will be reviewed by GEO-XI Plenary and endorsed at the next GEO Ministerial Summit.

Following the Vision for GEO 2025, the proposed key areas of activity for the next decade are:

- 1) Advocate for the value of **Earth observations** and the need to continue **improving Earth observation** worldwide;
- 2) Urge the adoption and implementation of **data sharing** principles globally;
- 3) Advance the development of the **GEOSS information system** for the benefit of users;
- 4) Develop a comprehensive interdisciplinary knowledge base **defining and documenting observations** needed for all disciplines and facilitate availability and accessibility of these observations to user communities; and
- 5) Cultivate **global initiatives** tailored to meet specific user needs.

The work in these five activity areas will build on the current GEO achievements and ensure that these achievements are sustained and evolve in keeping with the pace of policy, technological and information changes at the global level.

Maintaining its distinct approach, GEO will achieve the goals of the next decadal Implementation Plan through voluntary contributions, in-kind and monetary, from Members, Participating Organizations and external stakeholders. The majority of GEOSS implementation will be accomplished through continuing, substantial in-kind contributions by national experts participating in projects designed by GEO Members and Participating Organizations through multi-year GEO Work Plans.

As a voluntary intergovernmental body with a light governance structure, GEO relies on the advocacy by national governments in national and international forums to promote GEO's key objectives. With sustained national commitments to support ongoing initiatives, GEO will maintain the current capabilities of the GEOSS information system and pursue the development of a knowledge base on a best-effort basis facilitated by the GEO Secretariat and the larger GEO community, reaching out to stakeholders for input, including the UN agencies. The current global initiatives will be supported by the Secretariat, with much of the development being carried out by Members, Participating Organizations and stakeholders, while the development of new initiatives will be limited according to the capacity of these actors to contribute and will be carried out on an *ad hoc* basis.

Ministers may also wish to pursue an accelerated and more robust evolution of GEOSS that will expand GEO's capacity to connect and exploit the vast array of observation networks and information available and bring together the organizations required to truly support a comprehensive, interdisciplinary knowledge base. This will allow for improved monitoring of the state of the Earth, increased understanding of Earth processes and enhanced ability to make future predictions in order to respond to societal challenges. Such a path would need an increased spectrum of competencies in the GEO Secretariat and will require additional investments supporting GEOSS efforts.

Any trajectory in the evolution of GEO will need to ensure further efforts by which GEO mobilizes resources and participation in implementing GEOSS, such as:

- Progressively align relevant national investments with GEO programmes;

- Increase national and regional interagency and interdisciplinary coordination to expand the support base for GEO, establishing national GEO coordination bodies as appropriate.
- Pursue engagement with the private sector to broaden GEO's stakeholder base, resources and reach.

For more information, please refer to GEO documents “Vision for GEO 2025” and “Preliminary Guidance for GEO 2025.”