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Prof. Markus Rothacher
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Reference: Sustainability of IAG Services

Dear Professor Rothacher,

The Global Geodetic Observing System (GGOS) as an IAG component has been developed from an initiative to a central element of IAG. GGOS can be considered as IAG's central interface to the scientific community and to the public in general. The IAG Services and Commissions currently organized on a voluntary basis are the key components of GGOS. The IAG Commissions provide expertise and contribute to the scientific development of GGOS. GGOS contributes both to GEOSS and to the future of geodesy in the international scientific associations.

The GGOS concept has been developed for a long-term observing system. The existing geodetic IAG Services are the building blocks for the infrastructure and products of this observing system which will be serving GEOSS, and provide contributions to the scientific community and to the public. The IERS, IGS and the IVS play special roles in the current IAG structure by their well-rehearsed interactions with international organisations and scientific unions, especially the IAU. However the activities are not supported for the time being by long-term agreements.

The undersigned are strongly engaged in the geodetic observatory in Wettzell (Germany) that is jointly operated by the Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie (BKG) - Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy - and the Forschungsgruppe Satellitengeodäsie (FESG) of the Technische Universität München (TUM). They consider sustainability of the IAG Services and availability of the necessary infrastructure as key elements for guaranteeing the long term success of GGOS.

From the point of view of the undersigned one should aim at structurally and administratively strengthen the geodetic services and the infrastructure they are based on, and to secure a long-term perspective for them. To our opinion this goal can be reached by the governmental agencies as responsible organisations¹ for the services. These governmental agencies can create the reliable and binding basis for a necessary sustainable availability of the services by agreements on the long-term run of their observatories and services. As GEOSS and IPCC are intergovernmental organizations they would at the same time facilitate the entrance of GGOS to these bodies. In return the governmental agencies should be given the possibility of actively shaping the organisational structure. The operational components of IAG and GGOS should be further developed to intergovernmental tasks under the umbrella of IAG.

The sustainability of the IAG Services can be improved only when the organisations responsible for the IAG Services will bindingly agree on a joint strategy. Therefore the undersigned propose a Conference of the governmental agencies maintaining the IAG Services. The Conference should discuss and decide on the sustainable availability of geodetic services and their integration into GEOSS.

Furthermore this Conference could discuss whether a treaty of the countries involved could provide a better basis for the sustainability of GGOS.

The Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy (BKG), in view of its strong involvement in the operations of the geodetic observatories in Wettzell, Concepcion and O'Higgins is willing to host such a Conference.

¹ As responsible organisations we regard the agencies which make considerable contributions to the IAG services and infrastructures as regards content, staff and finances, e.g. NASA, NGS, IGN Spain, IGN France, CNES, ASI, SBSM, ESA, RSA, BKG, GFZ, BIPM.

Frankfurt, November 07, 2008



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