

Ministerial Summit

Preparation Organization

The present document presents a synthesis of the contributions received in response to the Secretariat's request for views and inputs regarding the preparation of the Ministerial Summit and proposes an organizational structure to prepare the Summit.

1 SYNTHESIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In the Resolution of the Third Earth Observation Summit, the participants "Resolve(d) to meet again, before the end of 2007, to take stock of progress and provide further guidance towards the successful implementation of GEOSS". The contributions received by the Secretariat are in line with this resolution. Indeed, there is consensus that the 2007 Cape Town Summit should primarily focus on three goals: first, to highlight the progress accomplished through GEO since its creation, second, to provide a vision for the future by setting clear short-term milestones for GEO and third, to be an opportunity to stimulate significant media exposure for GEO and the GEOSS 10-year implementation plan.

To meet the first goal, contributions recommended that the progress accomplished should (1) be described in a dedicated document, (2) occupy a large fraction of the agenda, and (3) be illustrated by side events and press packages. As for the second goal, there is agreement that the path for the future should be consolidated in a short document to be endorsed by the Summit as a Declaration. Finally, it is recommended that media exposure and presentations to Ministers be supported by written and video material on early achievements as well as demonstrations to be conducted during the Summit meeting and at side events.

In addition, there was one proposal to seize the opportunity of the Summit to initiate the preparation of an official document on the international status of GEO to be accepted in compliance with international legal standards.

2 DOCUMENTS

In order to achieve these goals, two documents need to be prepared for the Summit: a Report on Progress and a Declaration.

2.1 Report on Progress

This reference document will be 20 or so pages in length and will describe the progress of GEO since the last Earth Observation Summit. It will include many of, but will not be limited to, the achievements listed in GEO-III Document 23. These achievements will be evaluated against the 10-Year Implementation Plan, identifying areas where GEO is on track and those where GEO faces challenges or obstacles. An executive summary, 3 to 5 pages in length, will cite only the major achievements. Neither this document, nor its executive summary would have to be approved verbatim for the Ministerial. It should, however, be written in a manner and style such that would attract Ministers' attention, and motivate continued enthusiasm about GEO. The document should highlight achievements and/or systems where GEO has already demonstrated its added-value (e.g., GEONETCast, GEOPortal).

In addition to concrete achievements, this document will highlight the value of GEO as a process, in particular for improving coordination among programmes in a given Societal Benefit Areas (e.g., WMO-DPM / UN-ISDR / TEWS / SPIDER / CHARTER on disasters, DIVERSITAS / GBIF / GTOS on biodiversity) and for streamlining existing coordination mechanisms (e.g., CEOS/GCOS/IGOS). The document will also emphasize the role of GEO to strengthen cooperation at the regional level (e.g., Asia-Pacific GEOSS-related activities) and to enhance national Earth observation capacity and coordination.

The Report on Progress will take advantage of the location and date of the Summit (in South Africa, 5 years after the World Summit on Sustainable Development) and also present an evaluation of the progress accomplished through GEO against the Millennium Development Goals and the WSSD Plan of Action.

2.2 Declaration

The Declaration will provide a record of the Ministerial Summit and set a few clear milestones for the future. This should be a short, one-page document. The Declaration would first recall prior Earth Observation Summit and G8 declarations and the 2007-2009 Work Plan. It would approve the strategic

elements and principles developed in this plan. The document would then cite progress in GEOSS implementation, with a few examples, and highlight the importance of the global approach taken by GEO in addressing developing countries needs. The final paragraphs of the Declaration would endorse some specific actions to achieve agreed goals over the following years (until the next Ministerial).

Proposals already made for future priority goals include an extension of the International Polar Year, a global drought information system, a global air quality forecast system, an early warning systems for Meningitis epidemics in Africa, an earthquake mitigation programme, a coastal hazards early warning system, a crop failure monitoring system and a marine pollution management system focused on small closed seas.

The Declaration will convey a “GEO Vision” for providing global information as a basis for sound decision making and emphasize the value of GEOSS in contributing to society’s ability to address key societal issues (e.g., climate, disasters, health). It should also commit to maintain / improve Earth observing systems.

Finally, the Declaration should address data sharing principles. Developing more open data policies and data sharing agreements in Earth Observation remains a priority for several GEO Members. The Declaration could identify specific goals to reduce data policy barriers to align with the GEO goal of “free and open exchange” by a target date.

3 ORGANIZATION

3.1 Preparation of the agenda

There is consensus among the contributions that the Executive Committee should retain responsibility for the preparation of the agenda of the Summit as well as overall coordination and strategic guidance on all activities. Inputs for the agenda from Members and Participating Organizations will be collected by the Secretariat and presented to the Executive Committee.

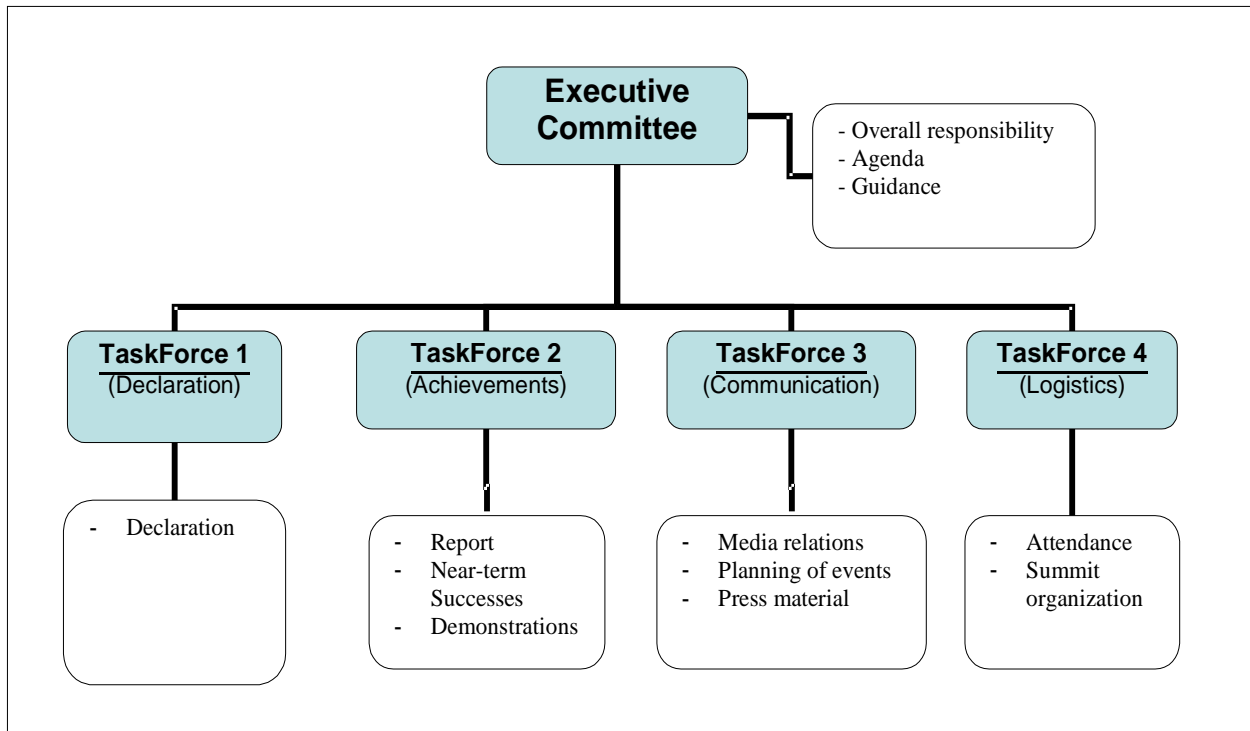
Preliminary views received on the agenda propose to split the meeting into three parts. The first part would be devoted to Near-term Successes, the second to national activities and the third to the Declaration. For the first part, it is proposed that 5 to 10 Ministers, reflecting the balance of regional caucuses, be selected to present a selected number of Near-term Successes, emphasizing the benefits for their regions and pointing to relevant future activities that need to be prioritized. These presentations would be supported by video and press material and, possibly, echoed by side events. During the second part, Ministers in attendance will be given 2 to 5 minutes each to present their national programmes and explain how they are aligned in the spirit of the “GEO vision”. The final part will be dedicated to the endorsement of the Declaration.

3.2 Task Forces

In order to prepare the two documents described above, to oversee the development of demonstrations of Near-term Successes, to develop the necessary communication material, as well as to ensure the proper preparation and smooth unfolding of the Summit, the Secretariat is proposing to set up four Task Forces:

- ★ Task Force 1: Declaration
This Task Force will be responsible for preparing the Declaration to be endorsed by the Ministers.
- ★ Task Force 2: Achievements
This Task Force will be responsible for preparing the Report on Progress, for selecting the Near-term Successes and for overseeing the demonstrations.
- ★ Task Force 3: Communication
This Task Force will be responsible for establishing a media plan and for coordinating all media activities prior to and during the Summit.
- ★ Task Force 4: Logistics
This Task Force will be responsible for the organization of Summit. It will also ensure proper attendance at the Summit.

The proposed organization is summarized in the following diagram:



Participation in Task Forces 1 and 2 will be open to all Members and Participating Organizations representatives. A Task Force coordinator will be selected among the participants. Task Force 3 will be led by the Secretariat and supported by the outreach/press network already established within GEO (see GEO Outreach Plan) with all press and outreach officers from Members States and Participating Organization which will become, de facto, Task Force 3. Task Force 4 will be established by the Republic of South Africa, as the host country, with the support of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat will act as a facilitator and ensure administrative support to all 4 Task Forces.

Preparation of the Declaration will be conducted by Task Force 1. This includes drafting, consultations and solicitation and incorporation of Member’s comments into a draft for negotiation. The work will be facilitated by the Secretariat with strong guidance from the Executive Committee and the Plenary.

Taking into account the relatively short time frame for the preparation, an option to be considered for the consultation and negotiation of the Declaration is to involve the Missions in Geneva. This would be beneficial to GEO in three ways. First of all, it would be more efficient and practical, thanks to the co-location of the Missions in Geneva. Second, it would raise the visibility of the Summit preparation within governments, given the more political view that the Missions would provide. Third, it would help to establish closer links between GEO and the Missions in Geneva, which would be beneficial to GEO in the long term. Indeed, involving Foreign Affairs Ministries will encourage governments to put in place national coordination mechanisms. It will also create the appropriate setting for preparing any additional agreements.

Task Force 2 will be responsible for the preparation of the Report on Progress, for the selection of Near-term Successes to be presented to Ministers and for overseeing the preparation of the demonstrations. Task Force 2 will work in close coordination with the four GEO Committees and the Tsunami Working Group. In addition, it may consider establishing a regional consultation process, via the regional caucuses, in order to strengthen the Report by providing examples of regional cooperation. This process of active consultation should help build interest in the Summit and may encourage greater participation by Ministers, as well as the stronger engagement of developing countries.

The Secretariat, in coordination with Task Force 4, will also perform an analysis of which Ministers are likely to attend (e.g., Environment, Science and Technology, Transportation, Interior, etc...) and report to Task Forces 2 and 3, so that both on-site demonstrations and media material can be tailored for the Summit's participants. Task Force 4 will also engage with Members and Participating Organizations to ensure the highest level of attendance to the Summit.

4 PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

All four Task Forces should be established in February and initial meetings should be planned as soon as possible. Task Force 1 may possibly meet in Geneva immediately after the Executive Committee meeting (13-14 March), to benefit from inputs from this Committee. Task Force 2 should deliver a first draft of the Report on Progress and a narrower list of Near-term Successes by the end of April.

The Communication Plan will be finalized by the end of March.

Finally, consideration should be given to an additional Plenary, in the May-June time frame, in order to further concur on the two documents, the list of Near-term Successes to be presented to Ministers and to agree on the agenda of the Summit.