

Swedish Statement at the GEO Ministerial 2014 (17 Jan 2014)

Chairman, Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Swedish Minister for the Environment, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for hosting this very important meeting on the future of GEO.

Today, we are looking back at almost 10 years of a unique cooperation of governments and organizations to collectively establish a shared and inclusive Global Earth Observation System of Systems, GEOSS. During the same ten years we have constantly been reminded of the urgent need for our joint endeavor.

Planet Earth is in trouble. The equivalent of 1.5 planets is presently needed to provide the resources we use and we use more resources every year. The environmental, societal and economic challenges we are facing are huge, ranging from the rapidly increasing world population, industrial development, changing weather and climate patterns to globalization. The dimension of environmental change is highlighted by a rapidly changing Arctic environment. Rising temperatures, loss of sea ice, melting of glaciers and ice sheets as well as ocean acidification represent a bellwether for the global impacts of climate change.

During the last years, we have seen an unprecedented sequence of extreme geophysical and weather related events. Several regions of the world are still coping with the consequences of earthquakes, floods and hurricanes, leaving many people in extreme distress. The extraordinary typhoon Haiyan is a tragic example, and we would like to express our strong compassion with the Philippine People suffering from its impacts.

It is my sincere hope and ambition that knowledge, in terms of observations, data, information and know-how, will be shared within GEOSS in order to mitigate the effects of such catastrophes in the future.

Actions are needed to respond jointly to the global and regional challenges through international cooperation and coordination. With almost 10 years of GEO behind us we need to build on our achievements and learn from our mistakes. The drafting of a new implementation plan is a central activity to define the future role of GEO. The GEO Geneva declaration and our collective ambition for the future of GEO provide the framework for the next phase. The open and efficient sharing of Earth observations will continue to be an integral part of our work and help to deliver information and services to many user communities.

Today, Sweden directly supports the work of GEO through a contribution to the GEO trust fund and we will continue to do so. At the international level, many of our contributions are channeled through existing European collaborations in the frameworks of ESA, EUMETSAT and ECMWF and through Europe's dedicated contribution to GEOSS, the Copernicus and Horizon 2020 programmes.

Full, free and open access to environmental data for informed decisions is at the heart of GEO. Consistent with this paradigm, SMHI (the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute) has decided to make all its data freely available from 2014.

Chairman, distinguished delegates. Sweden supports the Geneva Declaration as an essential step forward on our joint path towards the Vision of GEO for 2025.

It is our collective responsibility to maintain and further develop the achievements and to truly realize the full potential of GEOSS within all GEO societal benefit areas. Sweden is proud of being a member of GEO, and we will continue to support this important global endeavor during its next phase.

Thank you.