

Swedish Statement at the GEO Ministerial (13-11-2015)

Chairman, Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

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

Today, we can look back at 10 years of unique cooperation in GEO between governments and organizations to collectively establish a shared and inclusive Global Earth Observation System of Systems, GEOSS. Many of the original arguments for our joint endeavor are still very much valid today. Although we have seen progress, the current environmental and societal situation of the world has in many ways not improved to the extent we would have wanted. Climate change is the critical issue of our time. The rise in temperatures, and associated changes in rainfall, weather extremes and the rise of sea levels, risk having very serious consequences for life on Earth. We are already witnessing a global biodiversity crisis, with one of the largest species extinctions in the history of our planet. Climate change can work as a conflict multiplier, threatening peace as well as our chances of achieving all of the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals. A strong future climate agreement at COP 21 in Paris is therefore of utmost importance.

A fully-fledged and well-functioning GEOSS will be important for following up on the impacts of a new climate agreement, but it can also play an important role for many other challenges we face. During the next ten years it is essential that we closely align GEOSS with essential policy processes in order to maximize the benefit of Earth Observations in supporting decision-making. Political leadership, not least at the national level, needs to be reinforced, and implementation should be done promptly, without unnecessary delay. This is important for the credibility of the GEO co-operation, and for ensuring that results will be of practical use for political decision-making. We also need to more fully engage users outside of governments to address their needs as well.

Full, free and open access to environmental data for well-founded decision-making is at the heart of GEO. GEO will therefore play an important role when implementing the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda, not least in the follow up of the Sustainable Development Goals. Particular focus should be on developing countries, because they lack Earth Observations to greater extent and are often struck harder by natural disasters and effects of climate change.

Today, Sweden directly supports the work of GEO through a contribution to the GEO trust fund. At the international level, many of our contributions are channeled through existing European collaborations within the framework of ESA, EUMETSAT and ECMWF, as well as through Europe's dedicated contribution to GEOSS and the Copernicus and Horizon 2020 programmes.

It is important to take advantage of new benefits from the rapid development of technology for data collection, data management and data dissemination, which makes it possible to increase the pace of implementation of GEOSS. I am happy to report that since the last Summit, Sweden has made even more datasets of earth observations free and publically available. This includes reference data from the Swedish mapping, cadastral and land

registration authority as well as data from the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute, and there is yet more to come in the near future. I would like to encourage my fellow GEO-members to do likewise and report progress on a regular basis at future GEO meetings as a standing obligation.

Chairman, distinguished delegates. Sweden supports the Mexico City Declaration, including the Strategic Plan, 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 the newly refined Societal Benefit Areas. Sweden is proud of being a member of GEO, and we will continue to support this important global endeavor during its coming phase.

Thank you.