

CAPE TOWN MINISTERIAL SUMMIT

Draft Cape Town Declaration

We, the Ministers assembled at the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Ministerial Summit in Cape Town, South Africa, on 30 November 2007:

Recognizing that nations are facing major environmental, social and economic challenges as a consequence of climate change, biodiversity degradation, population growth and the unsustainable use of natural resources;

Recognizing that ground-based, ocean-drifting, air-borne and space-based Earth observations and scientific modeling are the fundamental building blocks for understanding a complex and interdependent world and are therefore critical resources for sound policymaking on the environment and sustainable development;

Recalling that the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) stressed the importance of Earth observation systems for protecting people and the planet and identified priority actions for strengthening capacity and collaboration in this field;

Recalling that G8 Summits in Evian in 2003, Gleneagles in 2005 and Heiligendamm in 2007 committed to strengthen international cooperation on comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable observation and information systems and affirmed the role of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS);

Reaffirming the commitments made by the Earth Observation Summits in Washington in 2003, Tokyo in 2004 and Brussels in 2005 to adopt and carry out the 10-Year Implementation Plan for building GEOSS and to establish the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) to implement this plan;

Recognizing that GEOSS will be built from the expansion and interlinking of existing observation and information systems and the investments of Members and Participating Organizations in new systems;

Reaffirming that for GEOSS to meet the growing needs of policymakers and civil society, users from developed and developing countries should remain the driving force of GEO;

We thank the Government of the Republic of South Africa for organizing and hosting today's Summit and thus advancing international cooperation on Earth observation systems;

We note with satisfaction the numerous early achievements towards the GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan, as described in the *Report on Progress*, which are already delivering multiple social, environmental and economic benefits such as facilitating access to information, enhancing resilience to natural disasters, improving energy and resources management and improving forecasting capabilities for climate and epidemics.

We are convinced that our investments in GEOSS will pay for themselves by elevating the effectiveness of policies and programs for managing key economic resources such as energy, water, agriculture, fisheries and forests. Other direct and indirect economic benefits will include reduced costs and risks of natural and human-induced disasters, adaptation to climate change at regional level, improved management of water resources and droughts, balance between agriculture, land use and biodiversity conservation and improved protection of ecosystem services such as clean air and water.

In evolving from concept to action and implementation, we envision GEO as the international framework to harness national and regional investments in Earth observation, prediction and information systems.

We concur that:

- a) Proper and efficient management of our evolving planet via informed decision-making is critically dependent upon the assurance of sustained operations of existing in situ and space observation networks, the improvement and expansion of modeling and prediction capabilities, a stronger coherence in the planning of future observation systems and continued research and development activities.
- b) Continued cooperation and dialogue through GEO will establish GEOSS as a powerful decision-support tool for managing global risks and opportunities. This emerging public infrastructure will become as essential to economic and social progress in the 21st century as new transport and communications infrastructures were in the 20th.
- c) This vision can only be achieved if every Member and Participating Organization takes full ownership of and responsibility for GEOSS. National and regional coordination, continued investments, technological advances and innovative approaches to financing will be vital for upgrading and expanding Earth observations and building the capacity of individuals, institutions and systems, particularly in developing countries.

We support the establishment of a negotiating process with the objective to reach a consensus on the implementation of the Data Sharing Principles for GEOSS to be presented to the next GEO Ministerial Summit. The success of GEOSS will depend on a commitment by all GEO partners to work together to ensure timely, global and open access to data and products.

We commit ourselves to sustain and enhance our efforts in Earth observation at national and regional levels that are the building blocks of the GEOSS we envision. We further commit ourselves to working together, at both the political and technical levels, to improve the interoperability of observation, prediction and information systems towards the continued strengthening of GEOSS and the full achievement of the 10-Year Implementation Plan.

Recognizing the fundamental importance of measurements in the radio frequency spectrum for GEOSS, we lend our support to the call for international protection of

frequencies for in situ and space-based observations, including passive measurements.

We encourage our Ministerial colleagues attending the upcoming Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bali, Indonesia to take note of the advances being made by GEOSS and its readiness to contribute to the objectives of the Convention.

We resolve to meet again before the end of 2010 to review progress, undertake a mid-term assessment and give further guidance on the implementation of GEOSS.
