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GEO Strategic Objectives and Core Functions

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In order to understand the Earth System and the impact changes in the Earth System have on society we need reliable, sustained and comprehensive observations. The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) was created to bring together diverse community of providers and users of Earth observations in order to create the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) that links together planned and current observing systems, improving the integration of, and access to, data and information.

GEO: a) is a unique global initiative mandated to coordinate and facilitate the integration of, and access to, land, water, sea, air- and space-based observing networks and their associated information systems; b) occupies an upstream position in the international community with respect to the major initiatives requiring observations, data and information about the Earth system; and c) brings together Governments and all relevant intergovernmental, international and regional organizations with an interest in Earth observations under a flexible, voluntary framework for coordinating strategies and investments, as well as developing new initiatives, through the on-going implementation of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS).

GEO has set itself ambitious strategic targets, and is making significant progress towards delivering them. Global and regional initiatives, such as AfriGEOSS, the Asian Water Cycle Initiative (AWCI), Blue Planet, the GEO Biodiversity Observing Network (GEO BON), the Global Agricultural Monitoring (GEOGLAM) initiative, the Global Carbon Observing System (GeoCarbon), the Global Forest Observing Initiative (GFOI), and the Global Mercury Observation System (GMOS), have been created to address gaps in our capability as identified by users. To improve access to data a GEO Portal has been developed, providing an entry point to access Earth Observation information and services held by GEO Members and Participating Organizations and GEONETCast, a near real time, global network of satellite-based data dissemination systems designed to distribute space-based, airborne and in situ data, metadata and products has also been set-up. In the 2010 Beijing Declaration, GEO Members committed to implement the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles by developing flexible policy frameworks that enable a more open data environment, and these Principles have influenced national and regional data policies, including INSPIRE and Copernicus (GMES) in Europe and Landsat in the US, facilitating the uptake of Earth Observation data by a wide range of user communities.

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