

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

## CAPE TOWN MINISTERIAL SUMMIT

### Draft Cape Town Declaration

At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Nations are facing major environmental and social challenges, individually and collectively, from sustainable development to climate change. They require accurate and timely information. Observations of the Earth, including predictions of the Earth system, are the foundations on which such information can be produced and used for evidence-based decision making by policy makers, civil society and the private sector.

We, the participants in this GEO Ministerial Summit assembled in Cape Town, South Africa, on 30 November 2007:

Recall the need expressed in this country five years ago, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to strengthen cooperation and coordination among global observing systems, prediction systems and research programmes for integrated global observations, taking into account the need for building capacity and sharing of data from ground-based observations, satellite remote sensing and other sources among all countries;

Recall the commitment made at the G8 Summit in Evian, in 2003, to strengthen international cooperation on global observations, fill gaps in existing systems and identify new observations to minimise gaps;

Note our commitments at the Earth Observation Summits in Washington in 2003, Tokyo in 2004 and Brussels in 2005 to build within ten years a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained Earth Observation System of Systems that facilitates the full and open exchange of data, metadata and modelling products derived from *in-situ*, air based and satellite platforms;

Recall the support of the G8 Summit in Gleneagles in 2005 for developing and strengthening the National and Regional implementation of GEOSS;

Reaffirm our commitment to make the needs of users, from developed and developing countries, the force driving GEOSS to provide timely, high quality, long-term, global information for evidenced based decision making.

Recognise the progress accomplished to date in the implementation of GEOSS, illustrated by the early achievements presented to us at this summit. These early achievements have demonstrated the value of GEO to:

- provide simplified and efficient access to data, information and services for users and decision makers in the nine societal benefit areas, from all parts of the world. In particular we welcome the establishment of the GEOPortal and GEONETCast as two complementary systems;
  - generate synergies between national, regional and international systems, increasing the efficiency of individual resources, providing more value for money to all GEO Members and Participating Organisations, and leading to better quality and sharing of observations, for the benefit of all. In particular we welcome the establishment of an early GEOSS component to provide free Earth observation data for users in Africa by Brazil and China;
  - be a unique framework for enhancing the dialogue and working relationship between all actors involved. In particular, we welcome the establishment of a Community of practice on energy, as a mechanism to generate information flows for instance on solar data in Africa.
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Note with satisfaction the emergence of National and Regional GEO structures as a means to build GEOSS from the ground level, and recognise their potential to leverage and contribute to the development of comprehensive, coordinated and sustained Earth observations. We therefore encourage the development of National and Regional GEO structures and commit ourselves to share best practices in this regard;

Emphasise for all Societal Benefit Areas, communities and regions, especially developing countries, the importance of free and unencumbered availability of data, metadata and Earth observation products that meet user needs. We reaffirm our support for the establishment and implementation of Data Sharing Principles for GEOSS. We therefore support the establishment of a negotiating mechanism that would finalise the implementation of the Data Sharing Principles for GEOSS within two years;

Commit to ensuring sustainable conditions for proper and efficient modelling, and in-situ, air-borne and space based monitoring, of our evolving planet. In particular we commit ourselves to ensure that gaps identified through GEO are filled through the continuity of operations, improvements to existing observing and modelling systems, prioritisation of the development of new systems and continued research and development activities. To this end, we lend our support to the call for international protection of radio frequencies for in-situ and space-based observations, including passive measurements, and for the development of a unified approach to Earth system prediction.

Recognise that building GEOSS is fundamentally an endeavour to build human, institutional and infrastructure capacity across all countries and regions, particularly in developing countries. We therefore support and encourage ongoing efforts through GEO to develop in country and regional capacity in Earth observation. In particular, we welcome the recent symposium in Spain, which engaged the Donor community to develop a sustained partnership in support of Earth observing capacity building.

Recognizing the need to continually improve coordination and strengthen the GEO process. We therefore commit ourselves to encourage stronger coherence between Earth observation planning of GEO Members and Participating Organizations, through the implementation of GEOSS;

Note the need to explore the development of the legal framework of GEO, in order to facilitate the progressive development, implementation and sustainability of GEOSS and create the conditions for the contribution of systems. We therefore agree to set up a mechanism to explore such a legal framework.