

Earth Observation Summit -- Frequently Asked Questions

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General Summit Info

Q. What is the purpose of the Earth Observation Summit?

The purpose of the Summit is to obtain high-level, international support for a system of integrated space-borne, airborne, and in situ observations, to help understand and address global environmental and economic concerns.

Q. Who is invited to the Summit?

The United States is inviting Ministers from the G-8 and other countries that fund or use observing systems or significant ground segments and are interested in development of a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustained Earth observation system. Senior officials of relevant multilateral organizations, multilateral development banks, foundations, and international science organizations are also being invited.

Q. When and where is the Summit being held?

The Summit will be held July 31, 2003, at the United States Department of State, Washington, DC.

Q. What countries are confirmed to participate in the Summit?

Please see list of confirmed participants on the Summit website, at <http://www.earthobservationsummit.gov>

If you cannot access the site, please contact Mr. Richard Ohlemacher, Policy Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, U.S. Department of Commerce (email: Richard.Ohlemacher@noaa.gov; telephone: +1.202.482.1567; fax: +1.202.482.4116).

Q. What U.S. Government agencies are participating?

The Summit is an interagency effort with strong participation from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy, Interior, State, Transportation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Science Foundation, the Environmental

Protection Agency, White House Council on Environmental Quality, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Q. What is the role for Ministers at the Summit?

In addition to the morning statements, the Ministers' perspectives will be essential to the topics of the afternoon's interactive panel sessions. The morning program for the Summit provides an opportunity for each of the Ministers to present their views on the importance of an integrated Earth observation system and to gain understanding of the plans and requirements of their fellow Ministers for such a system. In the afternoon panel sessions, Ministers will have the opportunity to ask questions of the panelists and to engage in dialogue with their fellow Ministers.

Q. How does this Summit differ from other Earth observation activities?

The Summit is a one-time event to obtain high-level, international support for a system of integrated space-borne, airborne, and in situ observations, to help understand and address global environmental and economic concerns.

Q. How does this Summit fit in with G-8 discussions on Earth observations?

At the 2003 G-8 Summit in Evian, France, the G-8 Action Plan on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development called for strengthening international cooperation on global observation and listed a number of specific activities. These activities include areas to which the Summit may directly contribute, including: developing coordination of our respective global observation strategies for the next ten years; identifying new observations to minimize data gaps; building on existing work to produce reliable data products on atmosphere, land, fresh water, oceans and ecosystems; improving the world-wide reporting and archiving of these data; filling observational gaps of coverage in existing systems; favoring interoperability with reciprocal data-sharing; and, developing an implementation plan to achieve these objectives.

B. Summit Afternoon Panel Sessions

Q. The invitation requests submission of a three-page paper on the topic of integrated Earth observations. Can both panelists and Ministers submit papers?

Yes. All speakers have the option to provide their statements in written form, up to three pages in length. Ministers' papers should be consistent with the short presentations at the "National Perspectives" discussion. Panelists' papers should address topics covered in the afternoon panels. The United States will compile these statements and publish them on the Summit website, as part of the proceedings of the Summit.

Q. Is the 3-page paper for the national perspectives oral statement to be read in response to questions discussed during the afternoon panels?

No. The three-page paper for the "National Perspectives" discussion scheduled in the morning is a separate submission and distinct from the afternoon panel participation.

Q. What is the purpose of the requested 3-page paper?

All speakers and panelists have an opportunity to provide statements in written form, up to three pages in length. The purpose of these papers is to enable speakers and panelists to submit text for the Summit record. These papers will be compiled and published on the Summit website, as part of the proceedings of the Summit. Guidelines for paper submission will be provided at the Summit website:

<http://www.earthobservationsummit.gov>

Q. What is expected of invited panelists?

(i) Provide a 3-page paper - guidelines have been provided and are included on the website - <http://www.earthobservationsummit.gov>

(ii) Provide up to a 5-minute oral statement (without visual aids).

Q. Will the panelists be open to questions from the floor by Ministers?

Yes. The afternoon panel sessions are intended to provide an opportunity for questions from Ministers and for an interactive dialogue.

C. Draft Declaration

Q. Where can we obtain a copy of the draft Declaration?

A copy of the draft Declaration is part of each country's invitation package and is also available on the Summit website:

<http://www.earthobservationsummit.gov/declaration.html>

Q. Can we provide comments on the draft Declaration to facilitate its adoption at the Summit?

Yes. The United States welcomes comments on the draft Declaration. The United States is requesting provision of comments from participants prior to the July 31st Summit. Comments will be incorporated into a revised draft Declaration, which we will distribute to participants by mid-July. If comments received prior to July 31st cannot be readily incorporated into the draft Declaration, we will provide facilities for a brief discussion session on the afternoon of July 30 (the day preceding the Summit) for representatives of interested participating countries. It is our intention that all comments or questions regarding the text of the draft Declaration be resolved prior to the day of the Summit.

Please send comments to Mr. Richard Ohlemacher, Policy Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, U.S. Department of Commerce

(email: Richard.Ohlemacher@noaa.gov; telephone: +1.202.482.1567; fax: +1.202.482.4116).

Q. What do you mean by comprehensive, integrated, and sustained?

We mean that the coordinated Earth observation system of the future needs to be: **Comprehensive**, i.e., meet the needs and requirements of a wide variety of science and application disciplines and provide system support solutions for decision makers worldwide; **Integrated**, i.e., connect and strengthen country and multinational organization assets through the appropriate integration of satellite, aerial, and in situ data in the development of applications, through development of networks and agreed standards, and through better coordination among countries and international organizations; and **Sustained**, i.e. address the need for continued, long-term financial and in-kind support.

D. ad hoc Intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO)

Formerly known as the Intergovernmental Ad Hoc Working Group

Q. What is the GEO and its purpose?

The GEO is designed to be a senior-level intergovernmental group drawn from the participating countries of the Earth Observation Summit. The purpose of the group will be to prepare a and ten-year Implementation Plan for a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained Earth observation system.

Q. What is draft Framework Outline and how does it relate to the ten-year Implementation Plan?

The draft Framework outline is intended to provide an overview of the scope, direction, approach, and expectations associated with developing an Earth Observation System (as stated in the draft GEO Terms of Reference). The draft Framework Outline should serve as the basis for the 10-Year Implementation Plan and provide Summit participants with a benchmark for their deliberations at the proposed follow-on meeting to be held in Japan in the spring of 2004.

Representatives will have an opportunity to agree on the scope and outline for the draft Framework Outline at the August 1-2 meeting. They will also have opportunities to consider establishing subgroups to address various aspects of the draft Framework outline, including writing assignments and a development schedule.

Please see: <http://www.earthobservationsummit.gov/prospectus.html>

Q. What is the process for establishing the GEO, as referenced in the draft Declaration?

The Earth Observation Summit Declaration will establish the GEO. The Declaration is on the agenda to be adopted at the end of the Summit proceedings on July 31, 2003. Each participating country is invited to appoint a senior governmental representative and a senior governmental alternate to the GEO. Additional experts may accompany the official representative, as required. We request that countries submit the names of their chosen representative, the alternate, and any accompanying experts, prior to the Summit. Send to Mr. Richard Ohlemacher, Policy Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, U.S. Department of Commerce (email: Richard.Ohlemacher@noaa.gov; telephone: +1.202.482.1567; fax: +1.202.482.4116).

Q. How will the GEO be governed?

It is proposed that the GEO will be governed as a committee with two Co-Chairs. The United States representative to the working group offers to provide Secretariat services for the GEO. The draft Terms of Reference provide further details as to the proposed governing structure for the GEO.

Q. What is planned for the GEO inaugural meeting, August 1-2, 2003?

During the GEO's inaugural meeting, August 1-2, 2003, it is intended that the GEO will select its Co-Chairs, agree on the Terms of Reference to govern its work, begin the process for developing the Framework Outline, and agree on next steps for developing the ten-year Implementation Plan. As stated in the draft Declaration, the GEO would conduct its work over the course of a year. The organization and design of the next phase of work beyond this first year will be determined by the time of the next Ministerial meeting, proposed to take place in Japan in Spring 2004.

Q. When will the GEO meet?

The GEO will convene its inaugural meeting on August 1-2, 2003, immediately following the Earth Observation Summit. Members of the Group will determine the number and timing of future GEO meetings. The United States envisions that the GEO would likely meet between three to four times over the course of the first year, including the inaugural meeting.

Q. From what government level do you expect the national representatives for the GEO?

We envision that the professional level of the national representatives to the GEO would range from that of a Deputy Minister to a Director of a government agency. The above does not mean that a Minister or other Head of Delegation would not be welcome, but it is not expected. The U.S. equivalent would range from an Under Secretary or Administrator to an Assistant Administrator. It is anticipated that the government representatives to the GEO will possess the following: broad knowledge of national goals, understanding of the value of Earth observation contributions, and a general knowledge of global Earth observation capabilities. We expect that countries would have

their representative speak for them at the GEO, and that it is likely that representatives would be accompanied by additional technical experts.

Q. Who are the U.S. representatives to the GEO?

Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator Conrad C. Lautenbacher will represent the United States on the GEO. The U.S. Government alternate representative is United States Geological Survey Director Dr. Charles G. Groat

Q. Are international organization representatives who are invited to attend the Earth Observation Summit also invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the GEO on August 1-2?

The representatives of the international organizations are also invited to attend the first meeting of the GEO on August 1-2 as observers, subject to confirmation by the Members of the GEO at the inaugural meeting.

Q. How will the Summit and the work of the GEO relate to existing international structures and programs?

Engagement of existing international structures and programs is important to the process of developing a 10-Year Implementation Plan for an integrated Earth observation system. The Summit and GEO documents emphasize the significant progress in Earth observations, as constituted in existing international structures and programs; including, but not limited to: the Integrated Global Observing Strategy, the 3 Global Observing System organizations for climate, terrestrial, and ocean observations, the World Meteorological Organization, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and related UN activities, the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites, and International Council for Scientific Unions.

Q. What is the Integrated Global Observing Strategy (IGOS) Partnership, and who is involved?

The IGOS Partnership provides a framework for coordinated decision-making and resource allocation for global environmental observations, both space- and surface-based. This framework includes all forms of data collection concerning the physical, chemical, and biological environments of our planet, as well as data on the human environment, pressures on the natural environment, and environmental impacts on human well-being. The IGOS Partnerships consists of stakeholders from the 3 global observing systems, their UN partners' international research organizations, national and regional space agencies, and funding agencies. For further information, please refer to the accompanying background paper on IGOS. <http://www.earthobservationsummit.gov/igos.html>

Q. How will GEO priorities be set and real work funded?

Funding and the criteria for setting priorities are important considerations that the Members of the GEO will need to work out. The United States envisions that each Member's participation in GEO activities will be subject to their country's availability of funds, personnel, and other resources. A draft **Discussion Paper on the Framework Document** is being developed to contribute to the dialog on establishing priorities for the Ten-Year Implementation Plan.

Q. How will the vision for the coordinated Earth observation system proceed?

A **Discussion Paper on the Framework Document** has been distributed. It offers an overview of the proposed process for developing a Framework Outline and subsequent Ten-Year Implementation Plan. The **Discussion Paper** discusses the need to establish a system architecture for an integrated Earth observation system, an approach for establishing priorities, and the need for an inventory of existing and planned assets.

Q. How prominently will climate-observing feature at the Earth Observation Summit and in the follow-on work of the *ad hoc* intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations (GEO)?

The Summit and its follow-on work, including the creation of a Framework Outline and ten-year Implementation Plan, includes all aspects of Earth observations (i.e., atmosphere, oceans, land, and ecosystems) and the range of platforms, (i.e., in situ, airborne, and space-borne systems) for uses in climate, weather, natural hazards, living resources, and related applications of national and international priority. Earth observing systems for use in climate science are essential to this effort. The development of a Framework Outline and ten-year Implementation Plan builds on the substantial set of Earth observation systems that are currently contributing measurements of geophysical parameters for climate science.

Q. What is the role of national representatives on the GEO?

The working group members are national representatives. It is an intergovernmental effort to connect governmental decision makers interested in coordinating the space and in situ communities. The GEO will also bring together related expertise in data handling, synthesis, modeling, decision support, and international coordination. These resources are all required for development of a comprehensive, integrated Earth observation system. Without diverse representation and input, this effort would be too limited in scope to achieve its goals.

E. Summit Logistics

Q. Are there limitations on the size of delegations to the Summit?

Yes. Due to logistical requirements, we request that countries limit the size of their delegations to three to five individuals. International organizations are requested to limit their delegations to 2 representatives. Additional technical experts can accompany the

country representative and alternate representative to the GEO. Invitees that have questions or concerns regarding delegation size or composition may contact Mr. Richard Ohlemacher, Policy Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, U.S. Department of Commerce (email: Richard.Ohlemacher@noaa.gov; telephone: +1.202.482.1567; fax: +1.202.482.4116). We will make every effort to accommodate the needs of participating countries.

Q. Will interpretation services be provided at the Summit?

Interpretation services will be provided during the plenary sessions for the following languages: French, Japanese, Spanish, and Russian. There will be no interpretation services provided during the GEO meeting on August 1 and 2.

Q. Is information available on hotel accommodations?

A. If invitees request, we would be happy to provide information on transportation and accommodation options in the DC area. Please see <http://www.earthobservationsummit.gov>

Q. Whom should invitees contact to confirm their attendance or to obtain additional information about the Summit?

Please contact Mr. Richard Ohlemacher, Policy Advisor, Office of the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Commerce (telephone: 202-482-1567; fax: 202-482-4116; email: Richard.Ohlemacher@noaa.gov).

F. Acronyms List

CEOS	Committee on Earth Observation Satellites
ESA	European Space Agency
FAO	Food And Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCOS	Global Climate Observing System
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GOOS	Global Ocean Observing System
GTOS	Global Terrestrial Observing System
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization

ICSU	International Council for Science
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IGBP	International Geosphere-Biosphere Program
IGFA	International Group of Funding Agencies for Global Change Research
IGOS-P	Integrated Global Observing Strategy Partnership
IHDP	International Human Dimensions Program
IOC	Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNDP	U.N. Development Programme
UNEP	U.N. Environment Programme
UNESCO	U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC/SBSTA	U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change
WCRP	World Climate Research Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization