

Outcomes of the High-level Thematic Debate on "Global Earth Observations"

The High-level Thematic Debate on "Global Earth Observations: An integrated approach to Human Security, the Environment and the Economy", hosted by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and Government of Japan, recognized the critical role Earth observations play in support of the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). In particular, Earth observations can contribute to the transition to a green economy that promotes sustainable growth and improves human well-being by jointly pursuing economic growth and environmental protection with proper stewardship of natural assets and ecosystem services.

Earthquakes and tsunamis; floods and droughts; ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss in freshwater, coastal and forest environments; and climate change pose risks to the security of water, food, energy, health and ecosystem services across the world today. Comprehensive, coordinated and sustained Earth observations and information are needed as a basis for sound decision making. Earth observations also form an integral part of regional cooperation on strengthening resilience to natural disasters and global climate change, harmonizing society with nature, promoting energy security and establishing a low-carbon society.

Effective collaboration through the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) can support the transition to a green economy. As partners share their data with each other, they can advance allocation of land and water use, the proper valuation and preservation of ecosystem services, and the reconciliation of environmental sustainability and economic development.

GEO has been developing the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) by promoting its Data Sharing Principles and establishing the GEOSS Common Infrastructure (GCI). GEO is now creating globally and regionally coordinated frameworks for several societal benefit areas, including forestry, agriculture, biodiversity and water. These activities demonstrate the value of Earth observations and information and can serve as a model for regional cooperation, enabling scientists, practitioners, decision-makers, citizens and other stakeholders to work together.

By recognizing how GEOSS, as a unique global system, can fully contribute to human security and well-being and the transition to a green economy, the international community can strengthen global Earth observations, support partners as they share their data with each other and help society towards achieving sustainable development.

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