



Terms of Reference (version 2.0)

GEO “Oceans and Society: Blue Planet” Initiative

Adopted on December 7, 2018

Note: These Terms of Reference (ToR) serve as an Addendum to the GEO Blue Planet Implementation Plan, as submitted to the Group on Earth Observations (GEO). Both the Implementation Plan and the ToR will be reviewed on an annual basis by the GEO Blue Planet Steering Committee, and updates submitted to GEO for approval as necessary.

1. Overview of the Governance of Blue Planet

The governing bodies of GEO Blue Planet include:

- Advisory Board: responsible for providing the strategic direction for Blue Planet and advocating for Blue Planet.
- Steering Committee: main decision-making body, responsible for coordinating Blue Planet’s activities, identifying and, where possible, contributing resources.
- Management Committee: responsible for managing the daily operations and activities of Blue Planet.
- Secretariat: provides scientific and technical coordination for the GEO Blue Planet Advisory Board, Steering Committee and Management Committee as well as logistical support for GEO Blue Planet activities.

1.1 Details of the governing bodies

This section provides information about the roles and responsibilities and *modus operandi* of governing body. Participation in the Advisory Board, Steering Committee and Working Groups will not be remunerated. Attendance of Advisory Board and Steering Committee members at symposiums, workshops and events will generally be funded by the members themselves, although opportunities for travel funding will be sought by the Steering Committee, particularly for members from developing countries.

1.1.1. Advisory Board

The Advisory Board will provide oversight and strategic direction to the Steering Committee. The Advisory Board will meet quarterly via teleconference, and if possible once yearly in person.

The Advisory Board will be composed of high level individuals representing foundational ocean observing organizations and users. Nominations will be invited via an open call sent out to ocean observing organizations and high level user representatives (i.e. UN Groups, World Bank). Self-nominations will be welcome. The Steering Committee will review nominations and select a maximum of 10 members to serve terms of 2 years, renewable once.

1.1.2 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the main decision-making body, responsible for coordinating Blue Planet's activities. Steering Committee duties are:

- To promote the aims and objectives of Blue Planet and expand its profile and prominence;
- To review and endorse the Implementation Plan and Annual Work Plans of Blue Planet;
- To monitor and evaluate institutional effectiveness of Blue Planet against aims and objectives outlined in the Implementation and Annual Work Plans;
- To represent stakeholder and shareholder interests;
- To provide guidance and support to Blue Planet Components and monitor their progress;
- To coordinate the production of deliverables for reporting to the GEO Secretariat;
- To work with the Blue Planet Secretariat and the GEO Secretariat to identify new stakeholders and shareholders that would contribute to and benefit from Blue Planet.
- To identify opportunities for collaboration between stakeholders/shareholders.
- To facilitate and coordinate relevant activities and mobilise resources when opportunities arise, in concert with the Advisory Board.

The Steering Committee will, as far as possible, operate by consensus. Decisions requiring a vote will be decided by simple majority of the votes cast. The quorum for a valid vote is participation of one half of the voting members of the Steering Committee. Votes may be held at meetings or by appropriate electronic means. These procedures will apply, for example, to make any changes to the Terms of Reference. The Steering Committee will meet in person at least once yearly and via teleconference on a bi-monthly basis.

The Steering Committee will consist of contributing shareholders and stakeholders. Contributing shareholders, as defined here, are those organizations that contribute resources for the overall coordination of Blue Planet (e.g. Secretariat, publications, Symposiums, etc.) and/or the production of new services (specifically as Blue Planet products). Stakeholders are those organizations that contribute to, or benefit from, the Blue Planet Mission and Objectives, and in particular the work of the Components, either from the provider or user end. It is anticipated that between one third and half of the Steering Committee will consist of representatives of user communities.

Steering Committee members will be elected by the existing Steering Committee, from among the nominations received following an open call. Nominations can be made by the Advisory Board, stakeholder and shareholder organizations, or members of the community. Self-nominations will be welcome. In their



decision, existing Steering Committee members will take into account the contributions of the shareholder organisations being represented, the relevance of the stakeholder organisations being represented, the balance between “providers” and “users”, geographical representation and gender balance.

Steering Committee members will serve a 3-year term with the potential for two one-year extensions (not to exceed 5 years in total). Steering Committee members must attend at least one Steering Committee meeting every six months or make alternate plans to meet with the Secretariat to remain on the committee.

The term may be shortened if the member is representing an organization and changes positions or if the member is unable to make the required time commitment. Three Co-Chairs will be elected by the Steering Committee members, and will serve terms of three years, with the potential for two one-year extensions (not to exceed 5 years in total).

1.1.3 Management Committee

The Management Committee is responsible managing the daily operations and activities of Blue Planet. Management Committee duties are:

- To provide support to the Secretariat on day to day operations and activities;
- To review progress on activities between Steering Committee meetings;
- To identify and support additional partnerships and funding opportunities;

The Management Committee is composed of the 3 Steering Committee Co-Chairs. A small number of members-at-large (preferably no more than 3) may be appointed by the Steering Committee to fill gaps in geographical representation and/or expertise. The Management Committee will operate via regular e-mail correspondence and conference calls with the Secretariat will be held on average every two weeks.

1.1.4 Secretariat

The GEO Blue Planet Secretariat provides scientific and logistical support for GEO Blue Planet activities. The Secretariat also provides coordination support for activities and developing partnerships. The GEO Blue Planet Secretariat reports to the Steering Committee and Advisory Board.

The Secretariat is composed of a Principal Secretariat Office staffed by a Director and support staff pending funding availability. The Secretariat will also have regional and thematic nodes depending on availability of funding. Secretariat nodes can be regional, thematic or a combination of regional and thematic.

The duties of the Principal Secretariat Office are:

- To provide overall support and coordination to the GEO Blue Planet network;



- To support and manage GEO Blue Planet activities as required;
- To provide direction and leadership for the regional and thematic secretariat offices;
- To support the Steering Committee in the coordination of GEO Blue Planet deliverables;
- To provide logistical support to the Advisory Board;
- To promote GEO Blue Planet in the international arena;
- To interface with and report to the GEO Secretariat on behalf of GEO Blue Planet;
- To support the organisation of GEO Blue Planet Symposia;
- To manage the GEO Blue Planet website, social media and other communications.

The duties of the regional Secretariat nodes are:

- To connect GEO Blue Planet with relevant ongoing regional activities;
- To provide technical /or administrative support to the principal secretariat office;
- To coordinate regional GEO Blue Planet activities;
- To coordinate with and support regional GEOSS initiative activities related to oceans and coasts (e.g. AOGEOSS Oceans, Coasts and Islands task).

The duties of the thematic secretariat offices are:

- To connect GEO Blue Planet with relevant ongoing activities related to the office's thematic area;
- To provide technical and/or administrative support to the principal secretariat office;
- To develop and support GEO Blue Planet activities related to the office's thematic areas;
- To coordinate with and support thematic GEO activities related to the office's thematic area (e.g. GEO BON/MBON, GEO Carbon and GHG Initiative).

2. Overview of GEO Blue Planet Activities

GEO Blue Planet supports and promotes activities that are aligned with the initiative’s mission.

GEO Blue Planet’s mission is to advance and exploit synergies among the many observational programmes devoted to ocean and coastal waters; to improve engagement with a variety of users for enhancing the timeliness, quality and range of services delivered; and to raise awareness of the societal benefits of ocean observations at the public and policy levels.

GEO Blue Planet supports and promotes internal and external activities in three cross-cutting areas and ten thematic areas.



2.1 Supported Activities

GEO Blue Planet supported activities are those whose formulation, funding and implementation are directly supported by the GEO Blue Planet Steering Committee or Secretariat. These activities include working groups and fixed-term projects. Supported activities will be identified as GEO Blue Planet activities on the website and in other outreach materials.

Process

- The GEO Blue Planet Steering Committee will solicit and review proposals for working groups and projects on an ongoing basis.
- Proposals will be selected based on applicability to stakeholder needs, cost/benefit and GEO priorities.
- For activities that require funding, GEO Blue Planet Steering Committee, Secretariat and activity leaders will work to apply for and secure funding for the activity.
- Regular updates on progress will be requested by the Blue Planet Secretariat for the website and monthly Steering Committee updates.
- Activity objectives, milestones and deliverables will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Steering Committee.

2.2 GEO Blue Planet Promoted Activities

GEO Blue Planet promoted activities are those that support the mission of GEO Blue Planet but are not actively supported by the GEO Blue Planet Secretariat or Steering Committee. Promoted activities will be listed as related activities on the GEO Blue Planet website and other outreach materials.

Process

- The GEO Blue Planet Steering Committee will review requests for activity endorsements on an ongoing basis.
- Activities will be selected for endorsement by the Steering Committee based on applicability to GEO Blue Planet's mission.
- Selected activities will be asked to provide informal updates to GEO Blue Planet (e.g. by giving a presentation at a GEO Blue Planet Steering Committee Meeting or GEO Blue Planet Symposium, or by providing a new article for the GEO Blue Planet website).

3. Adoption and review of the Terms of Reference

Version 2.0 of these Terms of Reference were adopted by the GEO Blue Planet Steering Committee on December 7, 2018. This document will be reviewed at least on an annual basis by the Steering Committee.