



IHB File N° S1/5062

CIRCULAR LETTER 55/2008  
27 June 2008

GROUP ON EARTH OBSERVATIONS (GEO)

References: a. GEO letter 2008386/GEO/Data Sharing, dated 30 May 2008  
b. GEO letter 2008385/GEO/GCI, dated 2 June 2008

Dear Hydrographer,

1 The IHO with the approval of Member States has been accepted by the Group on Earth Observation (GEO) as a GEO Participating Organization. The IHB follows the activities of GEO and is represented in meetings where appropriate. This is normally achieved by the attendance of the National Hydrographer at the meeting venue.

2 At the references GEO has asked its Member States and Participating Organizations to:

- register their data sets, services and other components, in order to be used by the Global Earth Observation System of the Systems (GEOSS); and
- provide comments on a White Paper that GEO drafted, that provides an overview of the international data sharing laws, principles and policies and recommends a draft set of implementation guidelines for GEOSS Data Sharing Principles.

3 Reference (a) is brought to the attention of Member States for information and any possible action that they may consider appropriate at national level. The White Paper on the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles has been posted on the IHO web site [www.iho.int](http://www.iho.int). under INT Organizations and a hard copy can be provided upon request.

4 The Bureau will take action with respect to reference (b) by registering the relevant IHO Standards with GEO..

On behalf of the Directing Committee  
Yours sincerely,

Vice Admiral Alexandros MARATOS  
President

Enclosures: References



Our Ref.: 2008386/GEO/Data Sharing

GEO Principals

Geneva, 30 May 2008

Dear GEO Principal,

One of the first accomplishments of the Group on Earth Observations was the acceptance of a set of high level Data Sharing Principles as a foundation for GEOSS. Ensuring that these principles are implemented in an effective yet flexible manner remains a major challenge.

As part of the implementation of GEOSS, a team of experts has worked on the GEO Work Plan Task on GEOSS Data Sharing Principles DA-06-0,1 under the leadership of the Committee on Data for Science and Technology (CODATA) of the International Council for Science (ICSU). Over the past two years, the team has drafted a White Paper that provides an overview of international data sharing laws, principles, and policies and recommends a draft set of implementation guidelines for the GEOSS Data Sharing Principles as outlined in the GEOSS 10-Year Implementation Plan. The White Paper (attached to this letter) builds upon a diverse history of data sharing practices to forge a set of specific guidelines for data sharing—consistent with the accepted Data Sharing Principles—that should enable GEOSS to maximize its societal benefits and realize its potential.

Following the successful initiation and progress of the Task, in November 2007, GEO IV requested that a process be put in place to further the establishment of detailed GEOSS data sharing guidelines leading up to their implementation. This document is not intended as a legal framework, but rather as a common basis for community discussion on how to share the data and information contributed to GEOSS. As such, I cannot emphasize enough how important it is that you, as Principals of GEO Members and Participating Organizations, now help to shape the draft Implementation Guidelines as described in the attached White Paper.

We feel it is important that all GEO Members and Participating Organizations contribute their respective expertise and vision for data sharing to this document. Only in this way can we be sure to establish a set of guidelines that are acceptable to all contributors to GEOSS.



The process for arriving at such a consolidated and detailed set of GEOSS Data Sharing Principles will be an evolving one. Over the coming two years, the Task Team, with support from the GEO Secretariat, aims to have these Guidelines further defined, thoroughly assessed and therefore mature for implementation by Members and Participating Organizations at the time of the GEO Ministerial in 2010. As next milestone, it is foreseen to present the White Paper to the 5<sup>th</sup> GEO Plenary meeting in Beijing in November 2008 for discussion.

In the expectation that the Guidelines will evolve by progressively reflecting increasing willingness to share data through GEOSS, the consultation process leading up to the 2010 GEO Ministerial will clearly include both the GEO Committees and the GEO Plenary.

I kindly ask you to request data sharing experts of your country, or Participating Organisation to review the current White Paper and to help shape the implementation guidelines by their input. This input should, of course, reflect the salient points concerning the data sharing principles in your country or organization that you would want applied to the components and other contributions you are prepared to make to GEOSS.

We look forward to your comments and contributions by 4 July 2008. Please consider this as a first step in an iterative process in which we are trying to achieve a “common platform” for all Members and Participating Organizations for sharing their data through GEOSS.

Yours sincerely,

José Achache  
Secretariat Director



Our Ref.: 2008385/GEO/GCI

GEO All

Geneva, 2 June 2008

Dear Colleague,

I am pleased to inform you that the Group on Earth Observations is taking a major step forward today with the start of a one-year evaluation period for the GEOSS Common Infrastructure, or GCI.

Several GEO Members and Participating Organizations have collaborated to establish this Common Infrastructure, which consists of a web-based portal; a clearinghouse for searching data, information and services; registries containing information about GEOSS components; and associated standards and best practices.

The GEOSS Common Infrastructure is now “open for business” and ready for you to explore and improve. The purpose of this year-long evaluation and learning stage, which is being called the Initial Operating Capability (IOC) period, is two-fold: first, it provides an opportunity for the entire GEO community to use, evaluate and improve the Common Infrastructure; and second, it enables Earth observation providers to populate GEOSS by registering their data sets, services, and other components.

This IOC period will be critical to ensuring that GEOSS achieves its true potential, and that decision-makers and other users adopt it as their preferred tool for accessing Earth observations. From this perspective, I cannot over-emphasize how important your regular feedback will be for improving the GEOSS Common Infrastructure as it is readied for a wider audience in the coming year. Positive or negative comments on all aspects of the infrastructure and its functionality, including the availability and quality of data, services, information components, and search capabilities, are welcome. Comments on the ease with which you are able to find pertinent and useful information in your field of specialization will be especially helpful, as well as the degree to which the portals and other elements of the GEOSS Common Infrastructure satisfy your requirements.

I hereby invite you to participate in this learning and evaluation period. Please visit the GEO Website at [www.earthobservations.org](http://www.earthobservations.org) where you will find all the information you need about accessing the GEOSS Common Infrastructure and providing feedback.



## GROUP ON EARTH OBSERVATIONS

As mentioned above, the IOC period also provides the opportunity to register components. Many GEO Members and Participating Organizations have already registered a variety of components, which can be accessed now via the three candidate GEO Portals. The success of GEOSS over the long term will be measured by the total number of data sets, services and components that will eventually comprise the registries and be made accessible through the Common Infrastructure. I therefore also invite you in your capacity as an Earth observations provider to register your data bases, services, other applications and resources. To register components please visit the GEO Website. The Strategic and Tactical Guidance documents are available on this site to assist in the registration process.

To ensure that both the evaluation and registration processes remain transparent, updates on the progress being made will be provided via regular emails and announcements at the GEO Website.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the success of GEO as we work to establish GEOSS.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "José Achache". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'A'.

José Achache  
Secretariat Director