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**AGENDA ITEM 14.3: Items Proposed by Members:**

**Group on Earth Observations (GEO)**

*(Paper presented by Australia)*



**Australian Government**

**Background Paper**

## Purpose of Paper

1. To introduce SPREP members to the value proposition of attending the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) Ministerial Summit in Canberra, Australia, 7-8 November, as part of GEO Week 2019 (4-9 November).
2. To better engage SPREP members with the global Earth Observations community to improve members' capacity to utilise Earth Observations in achieving SPREP Regional Goals, e.g., 1.1: *fulfilment of national environmental and development goals and voluntary and legal obligations under such agreements as the UN SDGs, the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, and the CBD.*

## Background

3. The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) is an international partnership of 105 Member governments, 127 Participating Organizations and thousands of passionate earth observation expert individuals and businesses that improves the availability, access and use of Earth observations for a more sustainable planet. Headquartered in Geneva, GEO is closely affiliated with the work of the United Nations.
  - a. GEO promotes open, coordinated and sustained data sharing and infrastructure for better research, policy making, decisions and action across many disciplines.
  - b. GEO's Strategic Work Plan is centred around three global priority engagement areas: the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
  - c. GEO provides a unique forum where governments, businesses, the research community, non-profits and all other groups come together to create solutions, share, and cooperate.
  - d. GEO Week is held every year, however GEO Ministerial Summits occur every four years, last held 2015.
4. Under the theme "Earth observations: investments in the digital economy," Ministers from GEO's 105 Member governments will gather on 7-8 November 2019 for a roundtable discussion, dinner and Ministerial Summit to discuss the integration of Earth observation data into the broader digital economy - critical for sustained, inclusive, economic growth.
5. While GEO's membership is broad globally, the Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs) are very underrepresented in GEO's decision-making process. This is despite the great potential for the work of GEO to benefit them at local, national and regional scales. The GEO Secretariat, together with partners (Australia, US, EC, France and regional organisations such as SPREP), are exploring options to increase the PICT's voice in GEO.
  - a. There is no annual membership fee for GEO member governments, however voluntary contributions are welcomed.
  - b. SPREP and SPC as intergovernmental organisations can engage with GEO in their capacity of being GEO Participating Organizations (POs). POs have some, but limited access to GEO's priority setting process.

6. This year's Ministerial Summit represents a one-off opportunity for the PICTs as it will be hosted in the region, providing greater access to GEO's priority setting process. As this year's host, Australia would like to stress the importance of developing plans for how the global earth observing community can better serve the needs Pacific island nations and territories, and therefore extends a warm invitation to all SPREP members to attend this year's summit in Canberra.
7. Some travel support is available to facilitate participation by Pacific Island ministers on a first come first served basis. Further information on the Summit (including the draft ministerial summit agenda) and GEO as an organization is available at [www.earthobservations.org/geoweeek19.php](http://www.earthobservations.org/geoweeek19.php) or by contacting Dr Stuart Minchin, Australia's Principal Delegate to GEO, [stuart.minchin@ga.gov.au](mailto:stuart.minchin@ga.gov.au).

### Recommendation

8. The Meeting is invited to:
  - **nominate** ministers to the GEO Ministerial Summit in Canberra, Australia (7-8 November 2019), November to ensure your earth observing needs are heard and opportunities for your nation can be developed.

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22 July, 2019