

Statement by the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) to the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, 14-18 March 2015 Sendai, Japan

Mr. President, Excellencies, Delegates and Colleagues,

We would like to thank Japan for organizing the 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR).

The Earth's atmosphere, oceans and land areas are being increasingly impacted by human activities. These changes to the Earth's physical system, in turn, exacerbate changes in areas such as food security, energy supplies, water management and disaster risk reduction. Observing and modeling these changes is critical to enabling governments and society to make informed decisions about global challenges facing humanity.

The critical role of environmental monitoring was fully acknowledged by the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which reaffirmed that environmental protection, economic development and social development are the three interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of Sustainable Development. The Conference also acknowledged the efforts of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) to provide access to coordinated Earth observation data, information, and services to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Group on Earth Observations is pleased that the post-2015 Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) clearly recognizes that satellite and *in situ* Earth observations, and related information and services, are critical to informing disaster preparedness and prevention policies, decisions and actions, thus providing a unique contribution to enhancing the resilience of communities exposed to hazards and improving their response to extreme events.

Achieving sustainable development requires an integrated and crosscutting approach, which has been GEO's working principle since its inception in 2005. The interim results of the UN Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals clearly point in this direction; the emerging SDGs will most likely constitute the overarching framework for the post-2015 global agenda. We are certain that the new Framework for DRR will constitute one of the key strategies to implement the SDGs.

GEO Member governments include 96 nations and the European Commission, and 87 Participating Organizations comprised of international bodies with a mandate and/or interest in Earth observations. Together, the GEO community is creating a Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS) that will link Earth observation resources world-wide across multiple Societal Benefit Areas, including agriculture, biodiversity, climate, disasters, ecosystems, energy, health, water and weather, and make these resources available for informed decision-making.

This established framework and worldwide network of expertise is proving its capability to deliver results at different geographical scales, from national to regional to global, making it fully consistent with the current approach for the post-2015 SDG era. GEOSS provides users access to more than eighty (80) million resources of Earth observations data, information, tools and models, through a dedicated Information Portal. In addition, global initiatives are being developed to increase the impact of Earth observation data and information for societal decision-making in such areas as agriculture, biodiversity, global carbon, forests, housing and urban development and oceans. For Disaster Risk Reduction in

particular, GEO is developing decision-support tools and applications for the full cycle of disaster management, particularly for developing countries.

Co-Chairs, distinguished delegates, I would like to conclude my Statement by underscoring two key messages that should be reflected in the outcome of the WCDRR in Sendai:

First, Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation frameworks and strategies should include Earth observations as an enabling component, and should ensure timely access to resources, such as the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), which provide decision makers and citizens the data and information necessary to make informed decisions prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from natural and human-induced disasters.

Second, the Group on Earth Observations is prepared to be a key partner in consolidating the post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and in supporting its implementation thanks to the contributions from its Members and Participating Organisations such as the Committee on Earth Observations Satellite (CEOS). This commitment is fully in-line with the direction provided by Ministers at the GEO Geneva Ministerial Summit, held in January 2014, where the GEO mandate was renewed for a second decade, through 2025. The Ministerial Declaration specifically directed GEO to take into full account the post-2015 Agenda and SDG process in the ongoing development of its new Implementation Plan.

I look forward to the continued, fruitful interaction between UNISDR and GEO, and to discussing with other participants how Earth observations and information can support this important and essential work.

Thank you.