

GEO BON Steering Committee Meeting

20-21 July 2010

UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge

Present:

Anne Larigauderie, Bob Scholes, Brad Reed, Cornelia Klug, Éamonn Ó Tuama, Gary Geller, Hal Mooney, Henrique Pereira, Jaime Garcia-Moreno, Jan de Leeuw, Jon Hutton, Michele Walters, Nick King, Rob Jongman, Simon Stuart

DAY 1, 20 July 2010

Agenda item 1: meeting goals and outputs, introductions

Bob opened the meeting by welcoming the group. This was followed by goals for the meeting and a run-down of topics on the agenda. The agenda was accepted by all.

Agenda item 2: SC membership and procedures

a) Simon Stuart (IUCN) was formally accepted as a member of the steering committee. Simon indicated that the IUCN was keen to engage with GEO BON and through this relationship will bring with it many other partners.

b & c) The SC agreed to be pragmatic when deciding on SC membership. GEOBON can't include representatives from *all* institutional partners *as well as* leads of all the working groups. The SC should be guided by GEOBON needs and strategy at the time and target key individuals accordingly. Generally the SC structure is working well and we should just pre-empt any potential issues or need for structure change.

Agenda item 3: Implementation: status, plans and approach

a) Working group reports were given based on the one-pagers sent out before the meeting and will be available on the website from mid-August.

WG1: Gary gave a rundown of the progress report and stressed that loss of momentum was a serious problem. With respect to building partnerships, Bob expressed a need to get the gene-level observations on board. Discussions should be held as soon as possible to ensure that the metadata standard for entry in GENEBANK includes information needed to make the data useful to the broader field of biodiversity – specifically, the organism the gene sequence was collected from (preferably linked to a collection record, the location and date of collection). Nick indicated that GBIF is doing some work in this regard. He said that GBIF will try to interact more with WG1 on this issue. Éamonn said that the IUCN too was looking into this matter. Jan suggested that the Microbis DB could be a good example for the IUCN to use when pursuing the matter. It was suggested that the composition of the working group (and all other WG's) be looked at to ensure key players are on board as the projects evolve e.g. in this case getting major genomics players onto the WG. Bob suggested that the paper for *BioEssays* be prioritized.

WG2: Henrique gave a presentation highlighting that the taxa used by the Biodiversity Indicator Partnership are biased geographically and taxonomically. To decrease bias, WG2 aims to fill some of the gaps in the information base in observational data through regional pilot projects in places where little is known. Lack of funding to build the necessary capacity in developing countries is a problem. Jaime stated that some of the people or networks needed are available and that it is a matter of getting the connections going and building capacity for taxonomy. Jan indicated that capacity is an issue for the other WGs as well. Henrique informed of a manual that WG2 is developing on the monitoring of terrestrial ecosystems, to be published by Springer. Jon enquired how WG2's work dovetails with remote sensing work and Bob suggested that links be made wherever possible. WG2 should find ways to work around the issues of bias in the sample frame (for instance, by applying appropriate weightings), since this issue will always be with us, even if we work to reduce it.

WG3: WG3 is actively investigating funding opportunities to continue their Ecosystem classification work at a global scale. Hal raised the question of how this group is interacting with the Ecosystem SBA. Everyone felt that these two groups should be working closely together. It needs to be made clear what the relationship between the groups are and that there are no conflicts. Rob said that discussions will be held once some results are out and that there is a meeting scheduled for August. He will give feedback regarding any action required after the meeting. There was discussion around the issue of linking *in situ* data with remote sensing data to create layers that will be useful for ultimately creating a global map of ecosystem change. Rob noted that more time is needed to bring multiple data sets together and that this is being done for certain areas. The work needs to be expanded to other parts of the world as globally-robust extrapolations can't be made. Bob indicated that work on land cover change is being done in the Agriculture and Forest SBA and that there should be interaction with this group to ensure

that the land cover classifications they use are biodiversity-relevant, and that the ecosystem classification becomes convergent with the land cover classification.

The issue of incompatible land cover classification products was raised. There was strong support for GEO BON to communicate to the remote sensing community the specific needs of the biodiversity SBA. Brad indicated that there is new momentum for the development of global 40m land cover maps and that EXCO has emphasized this as a high priority. So now is a good time to talk to the remote sensing community.

WG4: Jaime stated that WG4 was identifying potential partnerships and large organizations that can contribute large datasets. They are further investigating trial sites for the assimilation of large datasets to be used for testing global models. They are expecting issues with interoperability and are developing protocols and linking with WG7 with regards to modeling. Discussions have been initiated with RAMSAR to ensure a good relationship between GEOBON and this key user of freshwater biodiversity data. Lack of agreement among stakeholders is an issue and roles need to be better defined to avoid conflicts and promote synergies.

It was decided that a mixed-model approach should be followed with respect to approaching partners. I.e. WGs should pursue partnerships independently of the GEO BON SC and office, but communicate with the GEO BON office when they think organizations should be approached in a more formal, GEO BON-level way. It was suggested that WG4 invite a RAMSAR representative onto the WG if they feel it's necessary. It was decided that the protocols developed by the freshwater group could go into the methods manual WG2 is producing.

WG5: Jan indicated that they are looking at improving marine ecosystem classification at a global scale. There was a meeting with the marine section of US BON, the minutes of which will be available soon. WG5 is trying to build taxonomic capacity in the marine world, particularly in developing countries. Jan indicated that GEO BON was specifically mentioned by the European Commission in their recent call for Marine and Freshwater Biodiversity proposals. This is unusual and work should be done by WG5 and WG4 on a joint marine and freshwater proposal. The call closes in November. Simon suggested that WG5 also look at FAO and regional fisheries groups for funding.

WG6: Hal gave an update of WG6 activities. They have developed their conceptual models and are now ready to start making them operational. The group is planning a meeting in November where they will discuss the databases needed to construct the models. To this end several partners have been invited to the meeting e.g. FAO and the World Bank.

WG7: Gary gave a summary on behalf of Simon Ferrier and indicated that the WG is not clear on roles regarding funding and partnerships. Bob was tasked on behalf of the SC to draft a letter to all WGs to

clarify matters. It was noted that there is similarity between the tasks of WG 3 & 7. Bob indicated that he would like to see greater convergence among WGs, including merger where appropriate. Bob will interact with Simon to determine how the WG7 products relate to other WGs.

WG8: Éamonn indicated that this group lost momentum. People had the impression that it was a time limited task and the group has been inactive since they completed their submission to the Implementation Plan. He suggested the employment of someone on a full time basis to serve as a help desk i.e. technical coordination and support, to provide assistance to WGs and specific tasks. It was decided that the time is not right to employ someone at this stage but that it should be an issue for the medium term.

Brad and Michele were tasked with maintaining the web presence of all WGs.

Nick suggested that other working groups look at the report regarding technical standards produced by WG8 as they prepared their Implementation Plan section, as guidance regarding the implementation of GEO-compatible standards in their products.

Nick pointed out that this group does stand-alone work, unlike other WGs that can often piggy-back on existing projects. Thus if WG8 is to continue they need to be funded.

b) Are we on the right track? Gary gave a short presentation to start off discussions. GEO BON structure was discussed. Issues regarding national BONs, WGs, Regional BONs and how they all fit together and are coordinated were brought up. Many members felt that structure is not important at this stage but that we should rather be focusing on getting the WGs up and running and making sure that they are made up of the right people. Countries, WGs, Regional groups etc should be allowed to organize themselves. We should only provide minimum standards and give guidelines as to what we would like these nodes to do. Bob pointed out that these nodes/groups are forming spontaneously and we should be part of it and decide how best to facilitate them.

The issue of prioritizing our activities was brought up repeatedly. Simon pointed out that it is important to make progress in certain areas e.g. capacity building, in order for GEO BON to function at a later stage. Rob indicated that the European Commission will want to see results by 2015 when they will decide on GEO's future.

GEO BON should identify a broader set of key partners. Where the WGs feel they are able to approach partners, they should go ahead. They should inform the GEO BON secretariat of any partnerships they enter into. Some partnerships might have to be dealt with at a higher level i.e. at the GEO BON level, or the GEO level.

Jon provided background on the Biodiversity Indicator Partnership (BIP). He indicated that the partnership is broadly successful and should be kept going for the post 2010 set of targets. The suggestion was made that WCMC, IUCN and GEO BON converge on this issue – in other words, that the

GEO BON efforts with regard to the CBD indicators should be synonymous with those of BIP. Effectively, this means that BIP would be one of the GEO BON partnerships. Jon undertook to make this suggestion to the BIP governance structures and to draft a concept note regarding the BIP GEO BON partnership. Bob expressed the need to start drafting a response regarding the ad hoc technical group before the CBD CoP decision. IUCN, WCMC and GEO BON are committed to produce this report by the first half of 2011. If we use the BIP, 80% of the players are already represented. WG2 is writing a paper on the species-level gaps with regards to indicators and how to fill them. It will be out by November and could fit directly into the report. A workshop meeting of the ad hoc technical expert group (AHTEG) will be called after CoP, but dates should be decided on as soon as possible, so that key people keep the time open. Late November would be a good option. Jon indicated that the BIP team might be getting together anyway and he will report back on this. If the meeting is a big one, including many WGs, it might be feasible to arrange an 'all-hands' meeting back-to-back with it. It is likely that key governments would be willing to fund this activity but the workshop has to go ahead even if we find no new funding to support it, as this is a critical task for GEO BON. Jon was tasked to connect with BIP and get their take on it and what plans they have in this regard. Bob is to communicate to the CBD via Robert to share our plan. Simon proposed we decide which targets are relevant to the task we were given so we can narrow the scope and identify suitable expertise groups.

Agenda item 4: GEO BON in the organizational landscape

Anne gave a presentation on GEO BON in the biodiversity science policy landscape and clarified GEO BONs position with respect to the CBD and Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). IPBES is the new assessment body that serves CBD and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), while GEO BON is an observation body serving the MEAs and IPBES.

The mandate for GEO BON proposed at the CBD SBSTTA in Nairobi in May 2010 was supported to go to CoP10 in Nagoya. Specifically it calls for GEO BON to help deliver an adequacy report on biodiversity observation systems, within 3 months of the ratification of the task. GEO BON will create an adequacy report task team, drawing on existing expertise within the WGs, and in collaboration with WCMC and IUCN, as required by the resolution. Several iterations of the adequacy report will be required, with reviews in between. GEO BON should start the iterative process ASAP. This will be the first test of the proposed BIP-GEOBON partnership.

A discussion evolved around potential sensitivities in partner organizations with respect to, acknowledgement, overlapping mandates and competition for resources. We want to avoid conflict within the biodiversity information/observation community. It is important to be aware of any potential

conflicts or concerns that may be caused by a decision, and inform the affected parties in advance and solicit advice as needed. It was decided to do this on an 'as needs' basis, rather than communicating everything to everyone all the time.

GEO BON office needs to construct a database of the players in the biodiversity observations community, including the stakeholders and users.

Agenda item 5: Summary of key decisions during day 1

GEO BON should actively investigate and communicate (to the space agencies, via GEO) the projected needs of the biodiversity observation community for remotely-sensed data. This report needs to be couched in the technical specifications required by the designers of instruments: what variables, with what accuracy, resolution and update frequency etc.

GEO BON office must commence to build a database of biodiversity observation stakeholders.

GEO BON must always strive to be more than the sum of its parts.

DAY 2, 21 July 2010

Agenda item 6: Business plan for GEO BON

Bob gave a presentation outlining minimum requirements for GEO BON to stay operational, and what the requirements are to grow and deliver on the Implementation Plan.

It was decided that we have to use a multi-pronged resourcing strategy with 3 components.

1. We need to establish few large delivery oriented projects that demonstrate GEO BONs uniqueness. We should start thinking and work on a proposal document to highlight these for specific funders e.g. GEF. We should find someone with GEF experience that could advise on the process and protocol. Proposals to funding agencies should focus on what we can deliver, rather than on building an institution. GEO BON needs not only specific deliverables but also a clear and unique concept to take to funders. What can be achieved with GEO BON that couldn't be done otherwise? We should work with a 2015 timeframe. GEO BON-level proposals should focus on priority issues that cut across WGs: 1-3 cross cutting issues should be extracted to act as the core of these proposals. An integrated global ecosystem classification would be a good example - it is a product that wouldn't be done otherwise. Population level modeling in under-sampled parts of the world is also sellable. It was suggested that we put

together a small group (a task team, rather than a new formal working group) to develop this proposal. All proposals should include not only funding for deliverables but also cover some of the coordination costs. The secretariat will develop a concept note and start a reiterative circulation loop with certain GEO BON people and broaden it as needed. We can then start exposing it to potential funders and fine tune it as we go along. Reiteration should start in a few months as the funding process should be anticipated to take 2 years. We should use CoP and the ministerial opportunities to sound out potential supporters on an informal basis to find out what the needs are. It will be good to have an elaborated concept note by then.

2. At the same time we encourage WGs and empower them to apply for funds as needed and drive it themselves. We will offer an endorsement i.e. GEO BON branding if the project is aligned with GEO BON objectives and the implementation plan. WGs must inform the GEO BON office (Michele) about who they are approaching for what funding, to avoid conflicts and coordinate the approach.

3. In the short term we require funding for our immediate needs. The SC indicated that they could probably draw enough resources between them. Diversitas can fund WG6 in the early stages of its work, and also WG1 at least for this year and the next. Nick indicated that GBIF is getting their genomics group together for meetings etc and this should tie in with WG1 somehow.

The suggestion was made that we approach development agencies, specifically for capacity development proposals and regional BONs.

In the short term we need to find the funding to support the CoP side event and our ministerial commitment can be covered from the residual funding held by DIVERSITAS for GEO BON activities. It was decided that Bob will attend the GEO Ministerial summit in Beijing, as GEO BON chair, and GEO BON will be represented at the CBD CoP in Nagoya by several other SC members who will be attending: Nick, Jon and Anne at a minimum. SC members planning to attend either meeting should let Michele know, so that she can coordinate.

The issue of support from GEO was raised. Brad indicated that the secretariat is experimenting on funding certain things. They have elicited proposals for funding from certain SBAs. This might continue next year and include others.

Agenda item 7: Communications strategy

GEO BON needs to plan what is needed for the CBD CoP and the GEO Ministerial. We need to create materials that are reasonably generic so we can distribute them to multiple stakeholders in different

fora. It is important for GEO BON members to spread the message at appropriate meetings and conferences they attend, by distributing brochures, giving talks and arranging GEO BON sessions.

We can get people together without costs to GEO BON if we use existing meetings that WG members are attending anyway, and then arranging a back-to-back meeting. It will be useful to inform Michele of any big meetings on the calendar, so that she can help facilitate this kind of thing.

There will be a more formal communications strategy via e-mail, coordinated by Michele. Recipients will be included on an as-needs-be basis.

a) Bob will communicate with the CBD secretariat (Robert Hoft) about a statement they are likely to make to the Special Assembly - that they should not neglect to mention the importance of international cooperation in biodiversity information sharing. Nick suggested we see what opportunities are presented if one of the thematic panels is dealing with biodiversity information.

b) We will hear soon if we have a CBD CoP side event. These consist of a 1.5 hour slot: about 3 people talking 10-15 minutes each, followed by discussion. GEO BON office, working with Brad and Michael, must prepare brochures, posters, banners etc. GBIF or APBON may be able to display GEO BON materials in their booths in Japan. Gary was tasked to enquire of AP BON about this possibility.

c) We have to prepare a 3-5min video for the ministerial. Bob will investigate a production company in South Africa as a mechanism to do this, following the storyboard already submitted, and using material volunteered by WGs. There should be snippets of users indicating their needs and this can be done with webcams or handheld camcorders. Brad indicated that we need a mock-up accompanied by draft bullets for the session chair to introduce the video, by September. It was decided that we should try to have a complete product by then. We are still struggling to get China in on it but communications are ongoing through Rob. It is important not to get into the details of the science in the video, but rather keep it simple. We need to show global reach and communicate the idea that we focus on user needs. That should be followed by the message that biodiversity data is diverse and complex which is why GEO BON is needed.

d) It was decided that GEO BON will not have their own exhibition booth at the GEO Ministerial but associate with partners, where they agree to display GEO BON materials. Rob indicated that the EU stand will be happy to do this. We have a number of options e.g. AP BON (Gary to investigate).

Agenda item 8: Activities for 2010/2011

The next SC meeting should be week 3 or 4 of June 2011. A Doodle poll will be set up by GEO BON office to fix a date. The meeting is likely to be held in Europe.

Actions:

Action	By whom?	By when?
Draft minutes and information piece for the WGs and a reminder of the showcase.	Michele	3 August
Draft a note to the CBD around 1) suggested points that they might make in their presentation at the general assembly 2) that we are aware of the ad hoc report request and we will do it but will need their support to fund it.	Bob	6 August
The video should be completed by mid September. Communicate deadlines and set specifications. Enquire about costs of production.	Bob	6 August
Communicate with APBON regarding CoP booth space and how to get materials there. Also enquire if they are doing something similar at the ministerial.	Gary	13 August
Expert group to meet to develop adequacy report. Circulate through partners in BIP and our WG chairs.	AHTEG	Dec-Jan
WGs need to give ideas of potential stakeholders/partners to GEO BON office.	All	Ongoing
Summarize the options for a BIP GEO BON partnership and develop a 1 pager/ concept note.	Jon	
WGs to start thinking about their needs with regards to WG8	WG 1-7	December
Find out about the status and timeline on the document regarding needs for the Remote sensing community currently being done by GEO. GEO BON would be interested in participating in this process if the timeframe is reasonable.	Brad	27 August