

Honourable ministers, distinguished heads of delegations and delegates, ladies and gentlemen

Earth's environment is constantly changing and in recent years, substantial part of this change can be attributed to man's unsustainable exploitation of the planet's resources. Modern way of life has a significant, often devastating, and continuing impact on global environment, society and economy. Slovenia supports the international efforts made by GEO to contribute to the protection of the earth environment through coordination of global observations, identification and fulfillment of critical gaps in observation and establishment of a system of systems that will enable the collection and distribution of vital, timely relevant and reliable information and products to policy making agents and public world wide.

Slovenia already plays an active role in GEO via its full or cooperating membership in different international European or worldwide organizations, networks, initiatives and programmes such as WMO (World Meteorological Organization), EUMETSAT (European Organization for Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites), ECMWF (European Centre for Medium Weather Forecast) and GMES (Global Monitoring for the Environment and Security), EIONET (European Environment Information and Observation Network) and others. As a member of EU, we try to be active especially in tasks, led by the EU as an important player in GEO worldwide scheme.)

Slovenia appreciates recent progress that has been done in the framework of GEO activities and that can be seen also from the Report on Progress 2007 and the Early Achievements report. GEO has shown-up as a catalyst for further development and interlinkage of observation systems as well as for building new ones. Reported steps are encouraging and need further support from GEO community members. To this aim, we support the Cape Town declaration in its integrity, and at this moment I'd like to point out especially the statement which refers to the implementation of the Data Sharing Principles for GEOSS. We see the declaration as a commitment for all GEO members to follow the path towards the implementation of 10-years plan.

In May next year, Slovenia is organizing important international event, the 4th Environmental Conference entitled Bridging the Gap – with the ambition to identify and bridge the gaps in research, policy, technological development and capacities of society to respond adequately the emerging issues and future uncertainties in the field of environment. Environmental monitoring, global and regional, and therefore also GEO activities, will have important place on this conference. As this event will be in the contenxt of Slovenia's presidency to the EU during the first half of next year, we expect that EU will have possibility to check its GEO activities and contribution.

Due to climate change impacts, Slovenia and the neighbouring countries in the region are more and more frequently affected by water related natural hazards, floods and drought. At the end, I would like to draw your attention to our drought monitoring and management activities, which are also very much related to GEO program.

Recently Slovenia, being in all possible cross-sections of various regions, has taken over an initiative to organize a Drought Management Centre for South Eastern Europe (DMCSEE). It will serve as an operational centre for for South Eastern Europe for drouhkt monitoring, forecasting and management and will promote the use of good practices to mitigate the drought effects in EU member countries and other countries in this region.

As there are other similar activities and initiatives going on elsewhere around the world, we support the idea and proposal, given from US during GEO-IV in Cape Town, of linking drought monitoring activites and building global drought early warning system under GEO, involving of course other important players as WMO and UNCCD.

Thank you for your attention.