2nd GEOSS Science and Technology Stakeholder Workshop

GEOSS: Supporting Science for the Millennium Development Goals and Beyond

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Welcome address by Dr. Paul Becker, Vice President of the German Meteorological Service, Deutscher Wetterdienst, DWD, and German GEO Principal

!! Check against delivery !!

Dear colleagues / Ladies and gentlemen

As German GEO principal and Vice President of the German Meteorological Service, Deutscher Wetterdienst, I very am happy to welcome you to the 2nd GEOSS Science and Technology Stakeholder Workshop in the beautiful city of Bonn. Some of you may recall that this city already hosted the 3rd GEO plenary in November 2006. But August is definitely a better time to visit Bonn.

The title of our workshop is "GEOSS: Supporting Science for the Millennium Development Goals and Beyond". The eight Millennium Development Goals have been agreed at the end of 2000 after lengthy negotiations among countries.

The Millennium Development Goals are globally accepted with some also supported or addressed by UN conventions, like the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the UN Convention on Biodiversity (UNCBD).

I now will briefly summarize those Millennium Development Goals that are most relevant to our community, the GEOSS community.

The Millennium Development Goals address issues like eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; universal primary education; various health aspects, like reduction of child mortality, combating malaria and other diseases; and last but not least environmental sustainability. It is obvious that these can only be reached in global partnerships.

In order to monitor, report and verify progress in achieving the objectives set for each Millennium Development Goal, detailed indicators have been formulated. In this context Earth observation and socio-economic data and products provide basic input to most of these indicators.

For some Millennium Development Goals there exist very obvious links to observations, like for the goal to "ensure environmental sustainability". This goal uses indicators like *"proportion of land area covered by forests"* or *"total carbon dioxide/ CO2 emissions"*. Both variables are included into the list of Essential Climate Variables, and therefore this specific Millennium Development Goal will benefit from GEOSS implementation.

Another example is the *"eradication of extreme poverty and hunger".* Based on sufficient meteorological and hydrological information and by use of weather and climate forecasts output together with specialized application models, tailored information for farmers can eventually support food security and thus also contribute to reduce poverty. Again, GEOSS is aiming at providing support to these needs.

For each MDG targets have been set to be reached by 2015, but it is clear today that not all of these targets will be met in time.

But discussion has already started on how to proceed. This was one of the core issues addressed in the Rio+20-conference. The conference reaffirmed the Millennium Development Goals, but unfortunately no firm steps have been agreed on how to make sure the targets can still be met. Therefore, some Non-Governmental Organizations consider Rio+20 not being a full success. In order to move the discussion forward, last month Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced 26 members of a High-level Panel to advice on the global development agenda beyond 2015.

In one sense Rio+20 was successful – it put new buzzwords on the international agenda like *"Green Economy"* and *"Sustainable Development Goals"*. The latter should be added to the second phase of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals from 2015 onwards. However, these Sustainable Development Goals still need to be negotiated.

For us, the GEOSS community, paragraph 251 of the outcome document from Rio+20, *"The Future We Want"*, is very relevant. It states:
"We recognize that there is a need for global, ***integrated and scientifically based information*** *on sustainable development …."*

This is a good motivation for us to discuss which information is needed and what is achievable. I am convinced that the scientifically based information required, in many cases has to be built on systematic observations of our environment, and must include socio-economic information. For me, the integration of socio-economic information and interdisciplinary cooperation with social sciences will be one of the great challenges ahead, and possibly something to be addressed in this (2nd GEOSS Science and Technology Stakeholder) Workshop.

However, systematic, long-term, high quality, and sustained observation remains the core business on which to build. To my impression, the hard day-to-day work that is done to ensure such observations are being available is not well enough appreciated. The investments into observing systems, being it in-situ or remote sensing, like satellites, will only pay off, if it is matched with sufficient resources to make the data really serving the society to the fullest extent possible.

In this sense I wish you 4 fruitful days with lively discussions and, in my function as German GEO principal, I am looking forward to seeing your results and recommendations.

Nevertheless, I also hope you will find time to enjoy the hospitality of this city which hosts so many international organisations.