

**Statement to
The Fourth GEO Ministerial Meeting**

Cape Town, South Africa
30 November 2007

Professor John W Zillman
on behalf of the
Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) Steering Committee

Mr Chairman, Ministers, Colleagues,

I am pleased to speak on behalf of the Steering Committee of the Global Climate Observing System (GCOS) which advises the GCOS sponsors (WMO, the IOC of UNESCO, UNEP and ICSU), as well as the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, on the planning and implementation of GCOS through the networks and systems of their more than 180 Member countries who operate the established world-wide global earth observing systems – especially the WMO World Weather Watch and Global Atmosphere Watch, the IOC-led Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) and the FAO-led Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS).

GCOS, as itself a well established global system of systems for the observation of climate, is an important component of the GEOSS initiative. On the one hand, the GCOS community seek to contribute to the success of GEOSS and, on the other, to draw strength and support from the broader international earth observation framework which GEOSS provides.

GCOS aims to fully meet the needs of the Climate Societal Benefit (SBA) of GEOSS, as well as the climate and climate-related needs of the other GEOSS SBAs. The GCOS sponsors and Steering Committee are thus happy to see GCOS identified as the Climate Observation Component of GEOSS. GEO has provided support and visibility for the GCOS-sponsored ‘Implementation Plan for the Global Observing System for Climate in Support of the UNFCCC’ and a number of priority actions in the Implementation Plan have been progressed within the framework of GEO. I thank GEO and the GEO Secretariat for this support.

I must stress, however, that notwithstanding its already substantial achievements over the past 15 years and, for some of its component systems, 50 years, GCOS is still far from fully implemented and there are major shortcomings in atmospheric, oceanic and terrestrial climate observation systems around the world, especially in the developing countries. We look forward, therefore, to a continuing mutually supportive working relationship between the planning and implementation mechanisms of GCOS and GEOSS as we face the formidable challenges of achieving full implementation of the important component observing systems on which both GCOS and GEOSS are built.

Within the “Call to Action” of the “Report on Progress”, the GCOS community are particularly supportive of the call to update, expand and maintain, for the long-term, the in situ networks and space-based observing systems, in collaboration with the organisations and countries responsible for their implementation. The GCOS Steering Committee strongly supports the renewed commitment to capacity building in developing countries, in accordance with the GCOS Regional Action Plans and including the 2006 ClimDev Africa initiative. It also strongly supports the goal of timely, free and open access to earth observation data and products, as well as GEO initiatives for the protection of radio frequencies used in earth observation.

Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the GCOS Steering Committee. Thank you, also, and congratulations, to the GEO Chairs and Secretariat and the South African hosts of the Summit on a great achievement.