



**INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC COMMISSION**  
(of UNESCO)

**Thirty-third Session of the IOC Executive Council**  
**Paris, 20-30 June 2000**

Agenda Item: 4.3.4

**PLAN FOR AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESS FOR GCOS**

The attached documentation includes a one-page summary of the Strategic Framework for GCOS. An expanded text is being prepared and will be tabled at the IOC-EC meeting. The Executive Council will also be presented with a Draft Resolution on GCOS for consideration.

The Executive Council is asked (i) to note the continuing decline in observing systems, and to urge Member States to take steps to remedy the deficiencies in the observing system; (ii) to urge Member States to ensure that strong linkages are developed between the national agencies represented at the IOC and those represented at the meetings of the Conference of the Parties to the UN FCCC, where there is a difference between the two, to ensure that a coherent and integrated approach to global observation is taken at the national level; and (iii) to approve the proposed intergovernmental process for GCOS, and (iv) to approve the draft resolution.



## BACKGROUND

1. The initial phase of GCOS was focused on planning the Initial Operational System (IOS) within the atmospheric, oceanographic and terrestrial domains. The next steps for GCOS are to ensure the implementation of the IOS while continuing to plan enhancements to the IOS.
2. The GCOS operational system is designed to meet the data needs of users in the climate community. As such, GCOS must not duplicate those activities being pursued by its partners with responsibility for the domain-based observing systems, such as GOOS but focus on mobilizing resources on behalf of the climate community. GCOS should ensure balance and integration amongst its component observing systems, address the priority user needs and ensure the appropriateness of data products whether from observing systems or models.

## FRAMEWORK

3. The **strategic framework**, based on the evolution of GCOS and its partner domain-based observing systems, must be to:
  - Build on existing operational and scientific observing, data management, and distribution systems and their future enhancements to the greatest extent possible but require new operating standards based on GCOS principles. GCOS must promote the conversion of research observing systems to long-term operations and the maintenance of data directories on all GCOS data and products.
  - Build ownership by national governments in implementing a multidisciplinary global observing system for climate by stressing the **cost effectiveness** of building on existing national networks.
    - Encourage national implementation plans and commitments which respond to users at the national and local level and contribute to regional and global needs;
    - Work with observing system partners, the space agencies and national programmes to ensure GCOS needs are implemented in the domain-based observing systems; and
    - Utilize the intergovernmental processes of the GCOS sponsors and the UNFCCC to encourage national participation in GCOS implementation.
  - Address current deficiencies in the IOS and future improvements at the regional level by addressing known deficiencies using cooperative mechanisms, including regional workshops, to assist in capacity-building to allow developing countries to participate in global observing systems for climate. This must include working with countries, international agencies, and financial mechanisms to ensure adequate planning, infrastructure, and resources to implement and maintain observing, communications, and data analysis systems within developing countries.
  - Keep the IOS relevant to the users. There is a continuing need to understand changes in user requirements and to work with the research community to address requirements across domains (such as carbon cycle) and for combined satellite/*in situ* data products and to introduce new research and technology into the operational systems.

## **ACTIONS**

### 4. **Specific Actions** - in order to move forward on this strategy – include:

- Raising the importance of a global climate observing system within the priorities of the existing intergovernmental mechanisms through reports to the Governing Bodies of the GCOS sponsors.
- Utilizing the decisions from the Conference of Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC and the meetings of its Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) to develop strategies for addressing deficiencies in observing systems, using:
  - Decisions from COP, such as synthesis/analysis of national reports, to bring deficiencies to the attention of governments and through updates to the GCOS “Adequacy” report.
  - Regional workshops to develop plans and proposals to improve observing systems regionally to meet global, regional and national needs. Nest into existing regional activities and seek funding from bilateral activities or international financial mechanism, such as the GEF.
- Building a network of national coordinators (with partners) to serve as national contact points for facilitating communication and addressing GCOS deficiencies through national programmes.
- Changing the focus of the GCOS Steering Committee to implementation, rather than planning. The GCOS panels would provide the scientific leadership in their areas of expertise.
- Developing a timeline for implementation.
- Implementing a GCOS strategy will require interagency and national commitments and dedicated actions.