

EARTH OBSERVATION SYMPOSIUM (B1)
International Cooperation in Earth Observation Missions (1)

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CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE ON EARTH OBSERVATION
SATELLITES

Abstract

The Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) was established in September 1984 in response to a recommendation from a Panel of Experts on Remote Sensing from Space that was set up under the aegis of the G7 Economic Summit of Industrial Nations Working Group on Growth, Technology and Employment. This panel recognized the multidisciplinary nature of space-based Earth observations and the value of coordinating international Earth observation efforts to benefit society. Accordingly, the original function of CEOS was to coordinate and harmonize Earth observations to make it easier for the user community to access and utilize data.

Since the inception of CEOS, the circumstances surrounding the collection and use of space-based Earth observations have changed. The number of Earth-observing satellites has vastly increased. CEOS Agencies operate over 130 Earth observing space missions. Onboard instruments are more complex, and are capable of collecting new types of data in ever-growing volumes. The user community has expanded and become more diverse, as different data types become available and new applications for Earth observations are developed. Users have become more organized, forming several international bodies that coordinate and levy Earth observation requirements. In response to this changing environment, CEOS has also evolved, becoming more complex, and expanding the number and scope of its activities. For example, CEOS has played an influential role in the establishment and ongoing development of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). Indeed, CEOS coordinates the GEOSS space segment.

Since the release of the Kyoto Statement in 2015, CEOS has placed particular emphasis on coordinating space agencies to support implementation of three big global agendas: the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Climate Agreement. In 2017, these activities will scale up substantially, including through the establishment of a dedicated team on the Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2017, CEOS is also paying particular attention to new approaches to data manipulation and analysis that will support humanity to benefit fully from the potential of ‘big space data’. This ‘future data architectures’ activity aims to significantly lower the technical barriers that currently prevent a significant proportion of potential users from benefiting from the increasing volume, variety and velocity of satellite Earth observation data.

The current chair of CEOS, Dr Frank Kelly of USGS, or his representative, will provide an update on key 2017 CEOS activities.