

Helsinki Declaration

Collaboration to support international Group on Earth
Observation (GEO¹) efforts

Version 0.1, 10th June 2026



And



And



And



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¹ Group on Earth Observations, <https://earthobservations.org/index.php>

Herein referred to individually as a “**Partner**”, collectively the “**Parties**”:

ASREN

The Arab states Research and Education Network is a not-for-profit organization with the fundamental objective to implement, manage and extend sustainable Pan-Arab e-Infrastructures dedicated for the Research and Education communities and to boost scientific research and cooperation in member countries through the provision of world-class e-Infrastructures and e-services. ASREN is working heavily on supporting and enabling “Science Cooperation” through engagement with Science Communities, Open Science, Open Access and Science Clouds and Platforms.

GÉANT

GÉANT is a fundamental element of Europe’s e-infrastructure, delivering the pan-European GÉANT network for scientific excellence, research, education and innovation. Through its integrated catalogue of connectivity, collaboration and identity services, GÉANT provides users with highly reliable, unconstrained access to computing, analysis, storage, applications and other resources, to ensure that Europe remains at the forefront of research.

RedCLARA

RedCLARA (Latin American Cooperation of Advanced Networks) is a not-for-profit organization with the aim to foster collaboration between the different countries in the Latin America Region by providing research networking infrastructure for the use of researchers, educators, students and innovators making it possible for them to connect to each other and with their peers in the other regions of the world, and extending the scope to repository of open access publications, to blockchain infrastructure designed for enabling inclusive and scalable projects and solutions for education and research, or to shared HPC computing facilities.

TEIN*CC

TEIN Cooperation Center (TEINCC) is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting and advancing research and education networking collaboration across the Asia-Pacific region through the implementation and operation of the TEIN network and the Asi@Connect initiative. TEIN*CC works closely with National Research and Education Networks (NRENs), governments, research institutions, and international partners to strengthen digital connectivity, foster scientific collaboration, and promote capacity building and knowledge sharing. Through the provision of advanced network infrastructure and collaborative platforms, TEIN*CC supports research, education, innovation, open science, and emerging technologies such as AI, HPC, cybersecurity, and digital applications for developing countries in the region.

UbuntuNet Alliance

UbuntuNet Alliance is the alliance of Eastern and South African National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) supporting a vibrant connected research and education community. UbuntuNet Alliance is a membership organisation of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in Eastern and Southern Africa whose aim is to collectively seek to facilitate access by the region’s knowledge

communities to their and global research and educational resources and enable and proactively supporting research collaboration for the digital transformation of the higher education and research sectors.

WACREN

WACREN is the West and Central African Research and Education Network which aims to provide a World-class infrastructure and services for the West and Central African Research and Education community for development. WACREN has a vision to be a world-class infrastructure and services for the West and Central African Research and Education community, for development. This is achieved through building and operating a world-class network infrastructure, developing state of the art services, promoting collaboration among national, regional, international research and education communities and building the capacity of the REN community.

Recitals

WHEREAS the Parties desire to participate in a collaborative endeavour (as herein described) to continue the activities of the Katowice Declaration, to support international Group on Earth Observation (hereon referred to as GEO) efforts, for the purpose of advancing society and creating a better world, through research and innovation.

DESIRING to work towards a common vision in a manner which is collaborative and aims to share knowledge to enable Regional Education Networks to improve their performance, both individually and collectively, for the benefit of researchers and educators utilising GEO data.

AFFIRMING the ambition for the Parties respective communities to address and anticipate the needs of the research and education community by offering sustainable, open, innovative, and trusted infrastructures and services.

ACKNOWLEDGING the common challenges faced by the Parties when attempting to effectively integrate scientific collaboration across continents.

RESOLVING to find a collaborative, pragmatic and practical approach to delivering services that deliver GEO data in an efficient and timely manner.

HAVE agreed as follows:

Part I.
Introduction
Article 1
BACKGROUND

- (A) ASREN, GÉANT and RedCLARA met at the Internet Governance Forum, both physically in Katowice, Poland, and in a virtual setting, on the 8th of December 2021. This was under the auspices of the Town Hall session ‘Exchanging research data responsible to save the planet’, and culminated in the signature of the Katowice Declaration. On June 6th 2023, a revised version of the Katowice Declaration was signed to record the addition of two further participants, the UbuntuNet Alliance and WACREN. The following context was provided for the session.

- (B)** Global research and education networks support the advancement in global scientific knowledge related to climate change. The observation data, analysis and education materials, which are an essential foundation for addressing matters under the UNFCCC² are transported to and from researchers using the national and regional research and education networks (NRENs/RRENs). For some NRENs, compute and storage services are also provided to researchers in support of climate change research. The global research and education networks facilitate the cooperation between researchers across borders and continents. Our work contributes towards UNFCCC Articles 4.1(g and h) and Article 5.
- (C)** To meet the UN sustainable development goals, tackle climate change and to prepare for and respond to disasters (man-made or otherwise) requires data. This data is increasingly being centralised into large data sets from a variety of different sources and at varying volumes. As the pace of technology advances, the number of data sources and the volumes of data acquired continues to grow exponentially. While challenges exist in acquiring, transporting, storing, processing, analysing and then finally re-transmitting a subset of that data for the benefit of citizens and national governments, there also exists a growing divergence in the capabilities of a number of nations and citizens from global south countries to partake in this field at scale (in comparison to countries from the global north).
- (D)** The GEO communities focus on the transmission and exchange of data which is utilised in the realm of geospatial research. Geospatial research is the investigation into the various aspects of earth science, but with a focus on particular locations, and this relies upon a number of communication layers and distribution systems. These layers and systems, controlled by a number of different actors, when inter-mixed form a transparent underlying service, otherwise known as the internet. In some respects, these layers are operated by a number Private (commercial), Non-Profit, Governmental and Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) to form a communications commons which the GEO community relies upon for its systems and services to work.
- (E)** GÉANT, the convener and coordinator of the session, is a fundamental element of Europe's e-infrastructure, delivering the pan-European GÉANT network for scientific excellence, research, education and innovation. GÉANT is also a participating member of GEO, representing the interests of its National Research and Education Network (NREN) members, promoting their work, and trying to find opportunities to collaborate with other GEO members to help support science and researchers needs.
- (F)** The one-hour roundtable focused on how GEO communities, supported by the Parties and their respective NRENs, are responsible for the type of exchange of research data, explained above, that plays a role in saving the planet. This was in order to find a broad agreement that research and education networks can act as interlocutors for different GEO communities, with a statement endorsing as such.
- (G)** The agreed, recorded conclusions from the session, listed in Part II, constitute the body of this declaration.

Part II. Declaration

² United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Article 2 CONCLUSIONS

- I. A rapid and fluid exchange of data, information and knowledge among researchers worldwide is an important facilitator of scientific progress.
- II. It is noted that technical challenges exist regarding the synchronisation of platforms that support GEO-data transfer within and between continents, which requires further work to resolve. This includes the need to increase technical capacity.
- III. Human capacity building within and between NRENs and RENs on this subject should be supported.
- IV. The Parties recognise the need for increased engagement with end-user communities that produce and digest GEO-data. It is recognised that a proportion of GEO-data end-user communities are unaware of the technology that can be provided by NRENs and RENs for their research and education needs.
- V. Open access policies need to be formed and adopted in line with the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science.³
- VI. The Parties recognise the diversity of research priorities for end-researcher communities. This requires a better effort from RENs and NRENs to understand research priorities for each continent and identify areas of overlap in order for more effective collaboration.
- VII. RENs and NRENs have a role to increase digital literacy where this subject allows, especially when increasing the level of digital literacy for women active in the GEO ecosystem.
- VIII. RENs and NRENs should also be involved in governance efforts in areas where GEO communities are also active. Cooperation between RENs has already begun in this area.
- IX. A global research and education networking infrastructure is able to contribute to both technical and human capacity building, noted in points II and III.
- X. Enhancing the effectiveness of research along the GEO ‘chain’ will be essential in order to fully exploit the value of geospatial data. This can be done by regularly upgrading infrastructure and technology to meet the present-day requirements of end-user communities.
- XI. RENs and NRENs provide the mechanisms that enable the realisation of many of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. Collaboration with GEO-communities will be a vital example (and potential metric) to measure REN and NREN contributions here.
- XII. REN and NRENs should baseline where they already are regarding the Sustainable Development Goals. This includes the need to understand the level of open science usage in different world regions.

Part III. Declaration Article 3 LEAVING OR ENLARGING THE DECLARATION

³ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379949.locale=en>

A Partner may terminate its participation in this declaration by sending written notice to the other Parties. The effective date of the Partner's termination of participation in this declaration shall be 30 (thirty) days after receipt of such notice. A Partner's termination of participation will not terminate the declaration and it will remain in effect for the remaining Parties.

When a new organization requests to join the declaration, or if one of the existing Parties proposes to invite a new organization to participate, the existing Parties of the declaration will discuss the appropriateness of the organization. A decision by the existing Parties will be based on consensus. If the existing Parties decide positively on a new organisation, the new organisation will be invited to sign a statement to confirm their participation in the declaration. The period of participation for any new Partner must align with the duration of the declaration.