

Americas Caucus Meeting Summary
San José, Costa Rica
August 1, 2017

Attendees:

Omar Franco, Colombia, GEO Principal, Americas Caucus Co-Chair
Claudio Ceballos, Ambassador of Ecuador in Costa Rica, GEO Principal Delegate
Juan Carlos Fallas, Costa Rica, GEO Principal
Hilcea Ferreria, Brazil, GEO Principal Delegate
Luciano Parodi, Chile, GEO Principal
Yana Gevorgyan, USA, GEO Principal Delegate*
Heather Aucoin, Canada, GEO Principal Delegate*
Ana Medico, Argentina , GEO Principal Delegate*
Jaime Rodriguez, Bolivia, GEO Observer*
Diana Quimbay, Colombia, AmeriGEOSS Coordination Working Group (CWG) Chair*
Angelica Gutierrez, USA, AmeriGEOSS CWG Vice Chair
Nancy Searby, USA, AmeriGEOSS CWG US Participant
David Green, USA, AmeriGEOSS Disasters
Laura Griesbauer, USA, AmeriGEOSS

* Virtual participation

Opening

Omar Franco, Colombia welcomed the group and provided opening remarks. The group reviewed the agenda. We are 18 countries in the Americas Caucus however there is concern for lack of engagement from the countries. Today, there are only seven countries participating in this meeting. As Colombia prepares to step down from the Chairmanship of the Coordination Working Group (CWG) and the USA becomes the chair, we need to discuss and determine who will become the Vice Chair of the AmeriGEOSS Regional Coordination Working Group. This work is technical work that requires the ability to facilitate.

Business items discussions (numbered – decisions or actions highlighted):

1) Vice Chair selection of the AmeriGEOSS Coordination Working Group

- Omar opened the floor asking for nominations for the Vice Chair of the AmeriGEOSS Coordination Working Group.
- Diana provided some context for the role of the CWG chair position. She stated that what Omar has said is what they would like to promote. The position of Chair and Vice chair provide leadership to the CWG, which functions as a bridge to help coordinate activities and information between the Americas Caucus and the Priority Area Working Groups.

- Omar spoke to the need that whoever volunteers to take on the Vice Chair position should have the ability to host AmeriGEOSS Week and capacity building activities. Helping to foster these activities is part of the responsibility of trying to consolidate GEO at the local level. Omar spoke to the importance of the GEO strategy to advance knowledge and information sharing.
- The floor then was opened for discussion.
- Juan Carlos spoke to the organization of this event – AmeriGEOSS Week 2017. Angelica reached out to Juan Carlos to see if Costa Rica could help to host this, but also with the assistance of the Ambassador Roman Macaya of Costa Rica in Washington DC, USA. The Ambassador also provided connections to the Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Science and Technology, and the National Commission of Emergency to participate in side meetings later in the week. Juan Carlos and the Ambassador provided assistance and information on how to host this event here at the University of Costa Rica. With the support of the University and the Dean, along with a small contribution from the National Meteorological Institution, we were able to plan and organize this event. Juan Carlos also spoke to the work done by NOAA and NASA with the organization of this event. As you know,
- Juan Carlos is also in charge of WMO within the region. He spoke to how his work with WMO translates well to the coordination needed to make AmeriGEOSS successful. He volunteered for Costa Rica to take on the Vice Chair role.
- The Ambassador from Ecuador thanked Costa Rica for their assistance with organizing this meeting and provided support for Costa Rica to be the Vice Chair.
- Colombia, Canada, and USA all acknowledged their support for this nomination.
- Luciano thanked Costa Rica for hosting this meeting.

DECISION: Approval of Costa Rica as Vice Chair of the AmeriGEOSS Regional Coordination Working Group once Colombia's term as Chair is completed at the GEO-XIV Plenary in October 2017.

2) Define the frequency of Caucus meetings (currently 2 per year: 1 during AmeriGEOSS week “in the region” and the other during the GEO Plenary). Encouragement to include travel expenses in annual budgets of sponsoring organizations/countries.

- Nancy Searby proposed the above frequency for Americas Caucus meetings and opened the floor for discussion on if this frequency is appropriate and if the countries are willing to commit to this to financially support travel.
- Colombia (Chair) agreed meeting in person is beneficial to advance activities. He recommended that meeting in association with the GEO Plenary meeting, perhaps 1 day before, is most key. He proposed focusing resources for the AmeriGEOSS Week on capacity building training and only hold 1 in person Caucus meeting in association with the GEO Plenary and have additional teleconferences throughout the year.
- The USA noted that some years the location of the GEO Plenary may be prohibitive for travel, and those years it might be better hold the Caucus meeting in conjunction with the AmeriGEOSS week instead.

- Costa Rica agreed with the comment from USA. He noted this is a good alternative. He also spoke to the essential change of moving from 2 in person meetings to just 1 in person meeting, and that is an important change.
- As far as we can demonstrate to our government all the advantages and virtues of this initiative, it would be easier and more comfortable to negotiate with them if we have more active participation.
- USA proposed a recommendation for the number of teleconferences held during the year between Caucus members. Yana suggested holding one teleconference 4 weeks before the Plenary to determine who will participate in the Plenary, select Caucus Co-Chairs and ExCom members every 2 years, coordinate positions, organize what to discuss and decide upon at the Caucus meeting, and discuss any organization of side events.

DECISION: The Americas Caucus will meet in person one time per year in association with the GEO Plenary meeting, with the condition that if the location of the GEO Plenary is prohibitive for travel purposes, the group will agree to meet during the annual AmeriGEOSS Week. Because the 2018 GEO Plenary will be in Japan, The Americas Caucus will plan to meet in conjunction with AmeriGEOSS Week 2018.

The Americas Caucus will hold at least 1 teleconference per year. One teleconference will occur 4 weeks in advance of the Plenary. The other teleconferences will occur as needed.

The teleconference in September 2017 will include the following decisional topics: section of Caucus Co-Chairs and selection of ExCom members..

3) Selection process for the selection of ExCom membership – when will this occur? Should this occur at the teleconference 4 weeks in advance of the Plenary or at the Caucus meeting at the Plenary?

- Currently the membership of the ExCom from the Americas is Mexico, Colombia, and the US.

Decision: The countries will be prepared to select membership of ExCom at the teleconference 4 week in advance the GEO Plenary.

NOTE: Current ExCom members must attend the ExCom member meeting the day before the Plenary (October 24th) . Newly selected ExCom members must attend the ExCom meeting on Oct 27th (the day after the Plenary).

ACTION: Schedule the teleconference 4 weeks in advance of the GEO Plenary (week of September 25th)

- Currently the Americas Caucus Co-Chairs are from Mexico and Colombia.

Decision: The countries will be prepared to select Co-Chairs of the Americas Caucus at the teleconference 4 week in advance the GEO Plenary.

4) Proposals for AmeriGEOSS Week 2018 (location and date)

- Brazil expressed interest in hosting AmeriGEOSS Week 2018 and recommended holding it in San Jose, Los Campos, Sao Paulo. Potentially in June 2018. Brazil will need to confirm location and dates.
- Ecuador also expressed interested in hosting the event.
- There was a discussion to try to determine the best time frame to hold the event based on upcoming elections in various member countries.
 - Costa Rica noted that in May 2018 there will be a change in administration so August is better
 - Colombia noted that in August 2018 there will be a change in administration so that time frame doesn't work well.
 - So May-September is challenging. Maybe later in September? Or first week in May?

DECISION: We will finalize the location and date of the AmeriGEOSS Week 2018 virtually

5) Other business

- **Discussion on partnership with the private sector, other financial institutions for Initiative's support**
 - Colombia noted that they have included GEO in every agency in Colombia with resources. They can have arrangements with the private sector. They have planted seeds with several organizations, including those that work with academia. He believes the broader government should play a role in GEO, and this strategy has been successful for them.
 - Colombia offered to prepare a roadmap or operations manual to share their approach.
 - Costa Rica noted that private sector is participating in the AmeriGEOSS trainings and we could continue to engage with them and encourage them to come to next year's AmeriGEOSS week.
 - Costa Rica noted they can not have private sector directly finance their work. However, they can help cover logistics expenses, e.g. in WMO community, private sector covers coffee break and gets publicity for their products.
 - Colombia noted that we could be helping private sector see where they could play a role in helping GEO achieve its overall objectives.
- **Discussion on tasks and recommendations for the regional CWG**
 - Colombia asked if non-Americas Caucus members were participating in AmeriGEOSS Week. There were participants from the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Haiti. We can keep connected to them, and ask them to help us engage with their governments and they can share the value of the AmeriGEOSS Week training.

- Costa Rica noted we can build interest in AmeriGEOSS using GEONetCast, e.g. Caribbean islands that don't have the systems. This could motivate them to join AmeriGEOSS and note they can get more interaction and applications that way.
- We can also make sure the heads of the initiatives coordinate knowledge with the Principals, so they are aware of the work taking place in their country.
- **Through email, Ana Medico from Argentina, lamented not having a good online communication, and provided the following statements :**
 - I wanted to share with you our decision to pledge that our national contribution is devoted to support activities in the AmeriGEOSS initiative, which has already been informed to the GEO Sec.
 - Also, to invite you to attend personally and identify possible interested participants to the Summit on the Contributions of Earth Observation to Disaster Risk Reduction that is taking place in Buenos Aires on September 4-8.

Closing

- The Caucus Meeting was adjourned.