Fact Sheet
The U.S. Group on Earth Observations (USGEO)
www.usgeo.gov

What is USGEO?
USGEO is the interagency coordination mechanism for Federal Agencies' civil Earth observations activities. It is chartered as a Subcommittee under the White House National Science and Technology Council's (NSTC) Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Sustainability (CENRS).

How is USGEO organized?
USGEO is chaired by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), with current Vice Chairs from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Its membership consists of 13 Federal Agencies and components of the Executive Office of the President. A related USGEO Program supports OSTP leadership, the USGEO Subcommittee, and its working groups with in-depth analysis and interagency coordination. The Program also supports OSTP in analysis of key civil Earth observation priorities and objectives to facilitate improved national decision-making.

What does USGEO do?
The USGEO Subcommittee conducts much of its activities through four subsidiary working groups:

- **The Assessment Working Group** oversees and executes a triennial Earth observation portfolio assessment to contribute to the *U.S. National Plan for Civil Earth Observations*. The assessment provides an evaluation of the Nation's current portfolio of deployed Earth-observing systems according to their relative impact on key Federal objectives in 13 thematic domains, also known as "Societal Benefit Areas" (SBAs).
- **The Data Management Working Group** coordinates Earth observation data management practices across Federal agencies. It developed the *Common Framework for Earth Observation Data*, a set of voluntary Federal guidelines to improve the discoverability, accessibility, and usability of Earth observation data.
- **The International Activities Working Group** engages international stakeholders by formulating the U.S. position for, and coordinating U.S. participation in, the Group on Earth Observations (GEO). The United States leads or participates in multiple GEO-sponsored projects and initiatives, many involving enhanced global use of Earth observations to meet critical gaps in societal understanding.
- **The Satellite Needs Working Group** collects agency satellite observation needs for NASA to consider as part of its satellite systems engineering and budgeting processes. The USGEO Satellite Needs process provides the first-ever whole-of-government approach to addressing agencies' civil Earth observation satellite needs.

What is the Group on Earth Observations?
Established in 2005, GEO is a voluntary partnership of governments and organizations that envisions "a future wherein decisions and actions for the benefit of humankind are informed by coordinated, comprehensive and sustained Earth observations and information." GEO Member governments include 102 nations and the European Commission, and 106 Participating Organizations comprised of international bodies with a mandate in Earth observations.

What is the relationship between USGEO and GEO?
GEO is an international voluntary partnership in which the United States is a member and leader, whereas USGEO is a U.S. interagency subcommittee under White House auspices. USGEO is responsible for formulating the U.S. position for, and coordinating U.S. participation in, GEO.

Why are Earth observations important?
The Federal Government invests more than $4 billion annually in civil Earth observations. These investments, across multiple agencies, support essential public services, long-term basic and applied research, technology development, and the maintenance of the Nation's Earth observation infrastructure. Agencies also leverage Earth observation investments made by state, local, and tribal governments; international partners; academia; and industry. Data and information products derived from Earth observations and produced by the Federal Government provide users with critical information about natural resources, climate and weather, disaster events, land-use change, ecosystem health, ocean trends, and many other natural processes. Earth observations are critical to improving our ability to predict weather; understand human influence on food and water resources, energy security, and climate change; and anticipate their resulting impacts on human health and societal well-being. Earth observations also enable numerous private sector decision support services that enhance productivity, employment, and economic development.