

Title:

Report on progress in the development of methodologies, standards and protocols for climate-related terrestrial observations and related matters. Submission invited from the secretariat of the Global Terrestrial Observing System

Submission from the secretariat of the Global Climate Observing System

At its thirty-third session, the SBSTA invited the secretariat of the Global Terrestrial Observing System (GTOS) to report to the SBSTA at its thirty-fifth session on the progress made on matters relating to the development of methodologies, standards and protocols for climate-related terrestrial observations, improvement of terrestrial networks and synergy with on-going relevant initiatives.

The climate-related component of GTOS provides the terrestrial component of the GCOS programme. Matters related to the climate component of the GTOS are addressed by the Terrestrial Observation Panel for Climate (TOPC), which is sponsored jointly by GCOS, the FAO-led GTOS and by the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP).

GTOS had already provided reports to SBSTA on issues related to developing a framework for the preparation of guidance materials, standards and reporting guidelines for terrestrial observing systems for climate¹.

This issue and its impacts and consequences were analysed and further discussed in meetings of the TOPC and of the overarching GCOS Steering Committee. As a consequence, the GCOS Steering Committee, at its 19th session in September 2011, expressed its concern *“at the amount of work and expense required to establish standards for the terrestrial ECVs through a formal International Organization for Standardization (ISO) process and at the risk that emphasis on standardisation would divert effort from other tasks.”* After extensive further consultations by GCOS and its partners, it is suggested to maintain the focus on keeping the highest level of data quality and error estimates, as well as to guaranteeing data quality.

Therefore, GCOS and GTOS through their shared terrestrial expert panel TOPC and in cooperation with partner organisations responsible for global observing systems for land will continue to work on updating and upgrading existing ECV reports on standards aiming at establishing best practices (<http://www.fao.org/gtos/topc/ECV.html>). Establishing good practice guides is a significant way forward in standardizing terrestrial observations, globally while at the same time ensuring support from the organisations and people that perform the observations.

In this regard the GCOS secretariat, as part of its reporting, will update SBSTA on progress made as appropriate and looks forward to continuing its cooperation with the UNFCCC.

¹ FCCC/SBSTA/2011/misc.14, FCCC/SBSTA/2010/misc.10, FCCC/SBSTA/2009/misc.8, FCCC/SBSTA/2008/misc.12