THE GEOSS PERSPECTIVE: THE RIGHT INFORMATION, AT THE RIGHT TIME, TO MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS
A New System for Tackling Global Environmental Challenges
Tuesday/9:30/Pavillion 5, Room E

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There is increasing need to address global environmental change to provide for sustainable health development. An exciting, emerging approach to addressing these challenges is the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). With the ministerial-level support of 64 countries and the European Commission and 43 international organizations, GEOSS will, over the next decade, dramatically improve our understanding of Earth. Rather than predict and protect by measuring and monitoring discrete aspects of our planet, GEOSS will, as a "system of systems," serve to integrate data and other information from the thousands of individual technological resources working around the globe. In-situ, airborne and space-based observations will all be included. GEOSS benefits will include protecting and monitoring water resources, strengthening ecological forecasting, reducing human loss from disasters, and understanding the effects of environmental factors on human health.

As detailed by an international panel, GEOSS will provide a vital way to bring critical environmental data to the health community in a user-friendly form. GEOSS will contribute significantly to global, regional and local health systems by ensuring proper access to a vast amount of integrated environmental data. At the same time, GEOSS will provide access to the technological tools required to collect this information. Such data will be essential to global and local health authorities, especially in addressing diseases such as malaria, West Nile virus, SARS, and avian influenza. With GEOSS, satellite imagery will be made available to identify and map wetland habitats of mosquito vectors and avian reservoirs, and climate data will be used to predict vector abundance and global migrations of avian reservoirs. Better forecasting and tracking of weather systems will help mitigate the risks of disease vectors. It will be instructive to share information with the global public health community and receive input about health priorities as this dynamic effort is being pioneered.