

Statement of the Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
Administrator, United States Environmental Protection Agency
Earth Observation Summit II
Tokyo, Japan
April 25, 2004

On behalf of the United States of America, I offer both a thank you and my sincere gratitude to Japan for graciously hosting this milestone meeting. This meeting fulfills an important science and technology commitment made by heads of government and heads of state at the G-8 meeting in Evian, France to build with 10 years a better-integrated global observing system.

I express appreciation the work of GEO co-chairs, its sub-groups and the GEO secretariat. Together we have made much progress in the nine months since many of you gathered in Washington for the first ever Earth Observation Summit, hosted by Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Commerce Don Evans and Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham.

Today's environmental challenges are very complex; future challenges will be even more daunting. We must use technologies and build collaborative systems like this one to find better ways. GEOSS will provide a better way; it will provide us with the information and tools we need to answer tomorrow's questions.

This "system-of-systems" of remote and ground-based sensors and monitoring activities will enable unprecedented access to and use of information to track, predict and address pervasive threats facing the health of the planet and of humankind. Indeed it will give us the pulse of the planet.

The tools provided by GEOSS will aid us in managing watersheds and drinking water, food, transportation, energy, housing, disease outbreaks a the general well-being of the Earth's inhabitants. These tools will help us make decisions that help us to sustain people, promote prosperity and protect our planet.

Potential benefits are limited only by our imaginations.

Each of our countries has multiple systems by which we gather and analyze data. GEOSS provides us with a way to integrate data systems not only inside our countries, but also among our countries. It's not enough to have detailed information about what is happening in our own country or even on our continent. We must have shared information about what is happening around the globe to determine what the impact will be on us at home, and what impact we'll have on others. Like our planet Earth, the vision for GEOSS is one integrated, interoperable system.

Ultimately, we are here today because we know that GEOSS will help us provide our citizens with cleaner air, purer water and better-protected land, while maintaining a strong economy.

Thank you.