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U.S. PRESENTS FIRST DRAFT PLAN TO MONITOR THE EARTH

Plan Aims to Link Systems and Technologies in Global Earth Observation Effort

The U.S. today released a draft 10-year *Strategic Plan for the U.S. Integrated Earth Observation System*; a system that will benefit people and economies around the world by improving the ability to monitor, understand and predict changes to the Earth. The release of this draft marks a significant milestone in the ongoing development of a Global Earth Observation System, involving 48 other countries, the European Commission and 29 international organizations. The U.S. draft plan is now open for public and further scientific review and comment prior to being finalized by the end of the year.

"This draft strategic plan is a critical first step toward integrating observation technologies for tracking environmental changes in every part of the globe, enabling citizens and leaders to make more informed decisions about their lives, environment and economies," said Dr. John H. Marburger III, Science Advisor to the President and Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy. "To provide the science on which sound decision-making must be built, the aim is to ensure that 21st century technology will be as integrated as the planet it observes, predicts and protects."

Coordinated through the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), 18 federal agencies collaborated on the draft U.S. plan. The plan underscores how investments made over the past decade by the U.S. and our international partners have yielded unprecedented global views of the Earth as a set of complex, interacting processes. Already gathering earth observations around the globe, many thousands of individual pieces of technology are demonstrating their value in estimating crop yields, monitoring water and air quality and improving airline safety. This effort aims to integrate these systems into a new, more powerful system of systems that will offer new capabilities in understanding, predicting and managing our environment and its complex processes.

According to retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, "We must connect the scientific dots. Until we do, and all of the individual technology is connected as one integrated system, there will always be blind spots and scientific uncertainty. Just as a doctor can't diagnose health by taking just one measurement,

neither can scientists really know what's happening on our planet without taking earth's pulse everywhere it beats, which is all over the globe."

The draft plan focuses on nine societal benefit areas in which work is already underway and progress can be realized most quickly:

- Improve weather forecasting;
- Reduce loss of life and property from disasters;
- Protect and monitor our ocean resource;
- Understand, assess, predict, mitigate and adapt to climate variability and change;
- Support sustainable agriculture and forestry, and combat land degradation;
- Understand the effect of environmental factors on human health and well-being;
- Develop the capacity to make ecological forecasts;
- Protect and monitor water resources; and
- Monitor and manage energy resources.

The draft plan offers a vision of enabling a healthy public, economy and planet through an integrated, comprehensive and sustained Earth observation system and sets forth the following goals in achieving its mission:

- Identify current and evolving requirements in the full range of societal benefits;
- Recommend priorities for investment, including new requirements, as necessary;
- Utilize available and/or develop new technologies, instruments, systems, and capabilities to meet the identified requirements and priorities;
- Streamline and sustain existing Earth observation systems that are necessary to achieve societal benefits;
- Establish U.S. policies for Earth observations and data management;
- Expand existing governmental partnerships at all levels and develop new long-term partnerships with industry, academia, non-governmental, and international organizations that further the realization of these strategic goals; and
- Develop human and institutional capacity to enable the translation of observations into societal benefits.

On July 31, 2003, the U.S. hosted the world's first global Earth Observation Summit, held in Washington, D.C. That meeting launched the pioneering Group on Earth Observations. This group developed the framework of a global, 10-year implementation plan, which was agreed to at the second Earth Observation Summit held on April 25, in Tokyo. The US strategic plan will represent an important element of an intergovernmental implementation plan that will be presented to ministers at the third global Earth Observation Summit, to be held on February 16, 2005, in Brussels.

Strategic Plan for the U.S. Integrated Earth Observation System
http://iwgeo.ssc.nasa.gov/draftstrategicplan.asp

Earth Observation Fact Sheet, Benefit Sheets for all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and Tribal Nations
www.epa.gov/geoss/benefits

U.S. Interagency Working Group on Earth Observations
http://IWGEO.ssc.nasa.gov/

Global Earth Observation System
http://earthobservations.org/

About the National Science and Technology Council
The National Science and Technology Council (NSTC), a cabinet level council, is the principal means for the President to coordinate science, and technology policies across the Federal Government. NSTC acts as a "virtual" agency for science and technology to coordinate the diverse parts of the Federal research and development enterprise.

An important objective of the NSTC is the establishment of clear national goals for Federal science and technology investments in areas ranging from information technologies and health research to improving transportation systems and strengthening fundamental research. This council prepares research and development strategies that are coordinated across Federal agencies to form an investment package that is aimed at accomplishing multiple national goals.

To obtain additional information regarding the NSTC, contact the NSTC Executive Secretariat at (202) 456-6101

About the Office of Science and Technology Policy
Congress established OSTP in 1976 with a broad mandate to advise the President and others within the Executive Office of the President on the impacts of science and technology on domestic and international affairs. The 1976 Act also authorizes OSTP to lead an interagency effort to develop and to implement sound science and technology policies and budgets and to work with the private sector, state and local governments, the science and higher education communities, and other nations toward this end. The Director of OSTP serves as co-chair of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology and oversees the National Science and Technology Council on behalf of the President. For more information visit www.ostp.gov.

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