

PRESS RELEASE

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Group on Earth Observations Launches Worldwide Competition 'Aim is to Turn Data into Decisions'

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The Group on Earth Observations (GEO) just launched the GEO Appathon 2014, a global competition to develop mobile “apps” to help people make smarter decisions about the environment. (www.geoappathon.org) Competitors from more than 15 countries – and growing – are competing for \$20,000 in prizes being offered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

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 membership includes 89 nations and the European Commission, and 77 Participating Organizations comprised of international bodies with a mandate in Earth observations.

GEO Appathon 2014 is designed to create new, exciting and easy-to-use Apps using Earth observation data available through GEO’s Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). GEOSS is a unique, web-based clearinghouse that provides access to more than 65 million data records from archives spread across the globe. (www.geoportal.org)

“GEO Appathon 2014 is one of the critical next steps in the evolution of GEOSS to create mechanisms to readily convert data into information and tools for decision makers across society,” stated Barbara J. Ryan, Secretariat Director of GEO. “The Appathon is an important leap forward in unleashing the power of Earth observations.”

Apps will focus on addressing environmental and societal challenges facing decision leaders and individual citizens in developing countries across nine essential areas: agriculture, biodiversity, climate, disasters, ecosystems, energy, health, water and weather.

“Access to better information, in the hands of people who can use it every day, is a major step forward. This appathon goes beyond the open data movement. The aim is to turn data into decisions,” said Carrie Stokes, Director of USAID’s GeoCenter.

In addition to USAID, partners in the GEO Appathon include Esri, European Space Agency, Geospatial Media, GISCloud, Microsoft, National Research Council of Italy, and Open Geospatial Consortium.

Participation in the GEO Appathon is open to any non-commercial entity, individual or team from any background in any country. Apps can be created for any of the main operating systems, as well as open source platforms, and can be designed for any type of portable device. All Apps will be judged and the top winners will receive a cash prize and a year-long GEO network endorsement and publicity for the App. Registration for the GEO Appathon remains open through July 31st. Qualifying Apps must be received by August 31, 2014.