

CSIR hands over international earth observation role to GISTDA as incoming CEOS chair

Representatives of civilian earth observation agencies and institutions worldwide gathered at Fancourt in George to attend the 22nd plenary meeting of the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) from 11-12 November 2008. As the outgoing 2008 CEOS chair, the CSIR Satellite Applications Centre hosted the event and handed over the chair to Thailand's Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency ([GISTDA](#)).

Dr Darasri Dowreang, deputy director of GISTDA and CEOS chair for 2009, pledged her organisation's ongoing support for CEOS priorities through optimisation of overall resources, special projects in the Asian region, and a continuation of the CSIR's special project, dubbed 'data democracy'.

On behalf of participating CEOS members, the European Space Agency thanked outgoing chair Pontsho Maruping and commended her leadership and the work of her CSIR team over the past year. Commenting on the plenary, Mary Kicza, chair of the CEOS strategic implementation team echoed this sentiment, "The progress made by CEOS over the past year under the CSIR's leadership underscores the value of this key international forum."

The CSIR will remain a member of the so-called CSIR troika, with GISTDA as the chair and Brazil's INPE (National Institute for Space Research) as the incoming chair. The CSIR's role as incoming and CEOS chair was supported over the past two years by the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

The newly published 2008 CEOS handbook was launched by Dr Volker Liebig of the European Space Agency at the opening reception on 11 November 2008. Its theme, climate change, makes its appearance particularly timely, as this is a subject that has garnered global interest and debate.

As a closed meeting for CEOS members, the 22nd plenary allowed them to reflect on achievements and actions of the past year. Reports from various entities, such as working groups and the strategic implementation team, and ratification of new memberships, formed the bulk of the plenary activities.

CEOS membership encompasses the world's civilian agencies responsible for earth observation (EO) satellite programmes, along with agencies that receive and process data acquired remotely from space. Some 26 CEOS members and 20 associates were represented at this event, which drew a total of 74 delegates.

As a participating member of GEO (Group on Earth Observation), CEOS contributes space-based observational data to assist it in fulfilling its 10-year implementation plan in terms of the Global Earth Observation System of Systems. GEO has identified the following areas as a systematic method to represent the challenges facing planet Earth: agriculture, biodiversity, climate, disasters, ecosystems, energy, health, water and weather. The DST presently co-chairs GEO.



CEOS delegates at the 22nd plenary meeting held in George during November



Outgoing chair Pontsho Maruping with Dr Darasri Dowreang, deputy director of GISTDA and CEOS chair for 2009

EO is the gathering of information about the Earth's physical, chemical and biological systems by satellites and other data capturing devices. It is used to monitor and assess the status of, and changes in the natural environment and the built environment.

EO is becoming increasingly important due to the dramatic impact of modern human civilisation on the Earth and the need to minimise the negative impacts. As such, it provides opportunities to improve social and economic well-being