



CLOSING ADDRESS

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On behalf of the FAO, the United Nations Environment Programme, the Instituto Agronomico O'ltremare, I would first like to thank our co-sponsoring agencies who have supported this Global Land Cover Network Workshop the Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, and the National Remote Sensing Agency, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Development Cooperation. Our special thanks to our hosts the Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi and in particular the of I would like to thank A.K. Gosain and Sandhya Rao and Tarun Ghawana as well as all the logistical support staff working so diligently behind the scenes for their excellent coordination and organization. I am particularly grateful to the high level of political support shown by the government of Italy through the attendance of this workshop by her Excellency Minister Letizia Moratti , Minister of Education, University and Research.

It is our hope that this workshop has provided a forum to achieve a number of key objectives, most importantly, to develop the broad consensus among participants on the utility and importance of harmonisation of approaches for land cover inventory and land cover change assessment to support information for national and local policy development.

We have all agreed that the theme of the Expert Consultation was particularly timely in terms of the national requirement for the harmonization of land cover initiatives and the need for a common language for land cover characterization in India. It has equally been recognized that there is a growing aspiration to ensure that national initiatives are developed to be compatible with and be capable of linking to International programmes pertaining to land cover. We have certainly been very encouraged to see the high level of national/institutional commitment to participate in this important meeting, which we hope will be catalytic in initiating the process of charting a strategy for the development of a national programme for India to evaluate, and build consensus on the need for a common language for land cover classification and the appropriateness of LCCS for building a national schema for that purpose and the facilitation mechanism of GLCN to assist the process.

The partnership of GLCN will continue to support India in the realization of its goals to further test, evaluate, and receive training on the use of LCCS, and develop products and services applicable at the local, national and regional level. We remain ready to open the commitment of the GLCN partners to India to become a full partner in the GLCN programme and we welcome the indications of NRSA of

their willingness to join the global coalition of partners through a Memorandum of Understanding. We also look forward to taking a commitment with India within the GLCN framework, to become a training centre of excellence to further the capacity development within Asia.

The recommendations here are all the more important in the light of the recent launch of the “Land Theme” of the Integrated Global Observing Strategy, the momentum of the GEOSS process and the move towards the 3rd Earth observation summit all represent a threshold in changing attitudes towards the environment and sustainable development and the importance of the continuity of earth observation and the need for improved in situ measurement and data integration.

The recognition and articulation of your recommendations from this and similar workshops that FAO/UNEP and IAO are convening at a regional and national level need to start to feed the process of bringing the science issues to the international negotiating table. The implementation of these major environmental initiatives requires the availability of reliable land cover information. They thus have an important role in the planning and implementation of strategies for the achievement of the three priorities related to sustainable development and management of land and water resources:

- strengthening food security for the growing populations in developing countries;
- introducing sustainable agricultural practices to prevent degradation of land and water resources and thus to maintain their life-supporting capacity; and
- improving environmental protection in order to preserve a sound ecological balance and biological diversity, and to mitigate the effects of natural and people-caused disasters such as agricultural drought, floods, forest fires, soil erosion, landslides, etc.

The recognition of the important role that GLCN can play as a facilitating mechanism for coordination is acknowledged and the main partners in this process will actively work to follow up on your recommendations to ensure greater collaboration with your programmes particularly ensuring its full integration with the National spatial data infrastructure initiative and national mapping programmes.

I have no doubt that land cover mapping and monitoring will play an important role in implementation of this evolving SDI strategy. We are facing challenging tasks and there will be many obstacles along the road. I have no doubt that by joining forces in mobilizing our efforts, we shall succeed. I invite you all to keep alive and functional our network so successfully launched during the last few days.

I would like to close by acknowledging the true spirit of cooperation and hospitality shown by you towards us and thank-you for allowing us to join you to share and exchange our experiences.

I am indebted to extremely grateful to the excellent support of my friend and colleague Dr K.D.Singh who has worked miracles in organizing this workshop at such short notice, his professional reputation and charisma has stimulated you all to participate so actively – K.D my sincere thanks and we look forward to many years of active collaboration.

I close by paying tribute to all of you and thanks especially to the GLCN team of Antonio Di Gregorio, Craig Von Hagen, Paolo Sarfatti and Reuben Sessa for sharing their knowledge with us and contributing to such a successful workshop.

Thank you for joining us at this important meeting and my best wishes for your return home