

CSIR takes on chair of Committee on Earth Observation Satellites

The exotic location of Kohala Coast, Hawaii, was the backdrop for the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) plenary during November 2007 where leadership from the United States Geological Survey (USGS) was transferred to the CSIR.



The CSIR (represented by the CSIR Satellite Applications Centre) will chair CEOS for the coming year and is responsible for running its secretariat over this period. Funding from the Department of Science and Technology will ensure that CEOS activities continue to contribute seamlessly to a framework for efficient coordination across the agencies.

Commenting on this development, Raoul Hodges says, "It is an honour for the CSIR to chair CEOS. I believe it will allow us the opportunity to promote the goals of CEOS through proper international coordination of earth observation programmes and the maximum utilisation of their data." This ranges from the development of detailed technical standards for data product exchange to the establishment of high-level interagency agreements on common data principles.

CEOS membership encompasses the world's government agencies responsible for civil earth observation satellite programmes, along with agencies that receive and process data acquired remotely from space. Several working groups within CEOS address issues such as information systems and services; education, training and capacity building; and calibration and validation, and utilise expertise from member agencies. The organisation has a portfolio of developing country activities.

As the incoming chair, the CSIR has been actively involved in CEOS for over a year prior to the handover by the USGS. CSIR staff members serving as the secretariat are Raoul Hodges, Wabile Motswasele and Alex Fortescue, with support from Asanda Ntswana. The Meraka Institute's Terence van Zyl serves on the working group for information systems and services and is responsible for the sensor web task team; Minette Lubbe will be involved in the calibration and validation working group.

The CSIR will also be involved during its outgoing year, which commences in November 2008. Overlaps of this nature ensure smooth handover from one chair to the next.

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