



GEO Blue Planet 5th Symposium

24 - 28 Oct 2022 | Accra, Ghana

Local action in support of global traction

Press Release 24 October 2022

Accra, Ghana welcomes GEO Blue Planet's 5th Symposium

Alisa Hotel North Ridge, Accra, Ghana

Ghana becomes the focus of the global marine and coastal community this week as it hosts the 5th GEO Blue Planet Symposium. Themed "Local Action in support of global traction", this flagship event is being held for the first time on the African continent and aims to improve GEO Blue Planet's engagement with African nations in an effort to expand the Earth observation community of practice, strengthen local capacity, and provide them with access to resources, tools and services.

The event is being held between the 24th and 28th October in Accra, Ghana, and has been locally organised by the University of Ghana and the University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR), in close cooperation with the GEO Blue Planet Secretariat represented by Mercator Ocean International, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the University of Maryland, and the Atlantic Innovation Research Centre (AIR Centre).

The full-packed week includes training sessions, an opening ceremony with high level remarks, plenary sessions, and thematic workshops. The plenary sessions on fisheries, ecosystem conservation and coastal hazards offer a diverse and rich panel of speakers that will unpack the needs of coastal communities across Africa, highlight existing tools and opportunities for them to address their challenges, and provide inspiring examples, which can shine a light on the way forward.

A special session on Copernicus Private sector Opportunities will feature Ghanaian and European Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) who will give pitches on how their marine sector businesses are using earth observations. There will also be an interactive poster forum to exhibit cutting-edge research and developments, and facilitate information round-table discussions.

The discussions will have relevant actions for the Coastal Development Authority of Ghana to transform coastal communities into a booming economic powerhouse for the country and further afield. Meanwhile, the training sessions equip the next generation of researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs, who can connect their coastal communities and economies with global opportunities in ocean data to safeguard our seas and oceans, and create value addition for the fishing and other coastal industries.

“Highly polluted inland rivers imply that we are heavily polluting our oceans –hence killing the seas and oceans for the fishing industry – we must take efforts to stop illegal mining, stop pollution of our inland waters, and revitalise our oceans for boosting blue economy of Ghana- if we kill our oceans we are indirectly killing our own survival” – Professor Amos Kabo-Bah Associate Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR)

“We’re excited to be here in Ghana, for the symposium we look forward to making connections with the ocean and coastal researchers of Africa, and local and regional change-makers. We’re hoping the symposium will spark innovative projects to help with the sustainable development of Blue Economy across Africa, and improve conservation of Africa’s resources.” Dr. Emily Smail, Executive Director of GEO Blue Planet Secretariat (NOAA & University of Maryland)

“Mercator Ocean International is delighted to co-organize with the support of the European Commission this first GEO Blue Planet symposium in Africa. Ocean and coastal observations play a major role to ensure a safe, healthy and productive ocean. We look forward to further developing our collaboration with the African marine community to address these challenges.” Dr. Pierre-Yves Le Traon, Scientific Director, Mercator Ocean International.

The week will end with thematic workshops, to take the discussions further on the themes of using earth observational data for fisheries and aquaculture site selection, monitoring of coastline changes, marine litter, sargassum inundation events and to inform national adaptation plans.

The organisers expect to welcome about 200 participants from varying levels of government, research institutions, universities, commercial sectors, and other local stakeholders across Africa and beyond.

Recommendations from the community which are gathered this week will be presented to the wider GEO Week community between the 31st October, to the 4th November, when Accra will host up to 1200 visitors, again placing Ghana at the heart of the global Earth Observation conversation.

Important links

GEO Blue Planet Symposium website - <https://symposium.geoblueplanet.org/>

GEO Blue Planet website – <https://geoblueplanet.org/>

Group on Earth Observations (GEO) - <https://earthobservations.org/index.php>

GEO Week - <https://earthobservations.org/geoweek2022.php>