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Welcome address
to be given at the
Geoland Final Session
4th and Final Geoland Open Day

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Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs -
Invalidenstraße 44
Erich-Klausner-Saal

I. Welcome address

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Colleagues from other federal government departments,

on behalf of the Federal Government, I would like to welcome you most cordially to Berlin to the 4th and Final Geoland Open Day here in the Erich-Klausner-Saal of the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs.

I am very glad to welcome such a large audience.

I would like to especially welcome the representatives of the European Commission, the European authorities and scientific institutions and of the African Union.

II. The importance of geoland

Let me please illustrate the importance of the Integrated Project geoland within the framework of the European Initiative “Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES)” on the basis of the following facts:

The current report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the so-called IPCC report, the first volume of which was published in Paris on 2 February 2002 - that is only

one week ago -, does not only emphasize the dramatic development of our natural basis of life, the global eco system. It also substantiates the claim that today and in the future, we will need still more reliable data from earth observation in order to exactly understand the cause-effect relationship.

These data are not only required to analyze the global conditions, but will increasingly also have to be considered for regional aspects, since cause and effect of the expected global changes have their source and sink right there.

As a consequence of stronger climate changes, ecological, economic and social shifts on the regional and local level are to be expected which can no longer be interpolated by many years of experience, as has been done up to now. If we want to take effective action, the qualitative and quantitative detection of the changes at significantly shorter intervals will be necessary in order to introduce appropriate measures and assess their effectiveness.

This does not only include the observation of the physical regions but increasingly also of the human habitat. Let me mention here the sectors of regional planning, land use, the sealing of soils which has an impact on water management and, thus, indirectly on climate. These issues concern directly the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs as the

competent ministry at national level in cooperation with the federal states.

In fact, this shows directly the significance of GMES as an important initiative to cover the increasing demand for high-quality geo information.

From early on, the Federal Government has taken account of this demand by defining land monitoring as one of the national key elements and has supported the first Integrated Project (IP) from the 6th Framework Programme for Research of the European Commission on GMES - the IP geoland - as well as the ESA GMES service element "land information services".

For the German EU Council Presidency, too, GMES is of high importance. GMES ensures that Europe has independent access to information about the environment, climate change and security. By means of GMES it is possible to combine the efforts undertaken at European level in the sector of earth observation. The aim here is the long-term and reliable provision of relevant global, regional and local services for European users.

The course for GMES is set: Apart from the service for land use/land cover, the services "maritime information" and "provision of information for emergencies" will be implemented,

and others will follow. The activities for the development and coordination of the necessary space and ground infrastructure are well underway.

Our next task is to create a stable control and financing structure which will be sustainable in the long run.

The priority aim of the German EU Council Presidency 2007 with regard to the GMES initiative is to reach a European consensus on the further action to be taken in connection with the long-term issues of GMES. For this purpose, a GMES conference will be held in Munich on 17 April 2007.

The financial contributions provided by Germany, too, reflect the high importance of GMES. As from the year 2008 until 2012, an amount of about 142 million Euro will be made available from the budget of the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs to set up the GMES space component of ESA which is urgently required for the information services.

Today's session to mark the conclusion of the geoland project is of special interest. We do not only expect to give first answers on the current demands for urgently required geo information services in order to meet global and also regional challenges. Moreover, we hope to derive some clues to measures which are necessary for the operational implementation of the services.

As the future coordinating ministry of the Federal Government for national GMES issues – a function we will have as from 2008 – we are looking forward to this session and its results.

I hope you have a successful conference and a pleasant stay in Berlin.