

Barbara J. Ryan

Secretariat Director, Group on Earth Observations (GEO)

Barbara Ryan, based in Geneva, Switzerland, has worked to integrate Earth observation systems from around the world into a single, comprehensive system that uses coordinated data to understand how environmental factors impact human life. Under Ryan's leadership, millions of satellite images have been made available to the general public at no charge, allowing scientists, planners and policy makers to take a comprehensive approach to problems that transcend political boundaries. Her work addresses critical issues in agriculture, biodiversity, climate change, disaster planning, energy, and health.

After graduating from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Cortland with a degree in geology in 1974, Barbara Ryan joined the United States Geological Survey (USGS). She became an expert in groundwater contamination and eventually was selected as staff assistant to the Department of the Interior's top official for water and science. Ryan was recently awarded an honorary doctorate of science degree from SUNY Cortland.

Barbara Ryan advanced steadily in the USGS, earning master's degrees in geography from the University of Denver and in civil engineering from Stanford University along the way. As associate director for geography at the USGS, she was responsible for the agency's remote sensing, geography and civilian mapping programs, including the Landsat satellites.

Ryan has served as chair of the international Committee on Earth Observation Satellites, which coordinates information from more than 100 civilian satellites, and in 2008 became director of the World Meteorological Organization's space program.

Ms. Ryan brings a strong cross-disciplinary and international perspective to the Town Hall Meeting on Open Environmental Information Services.