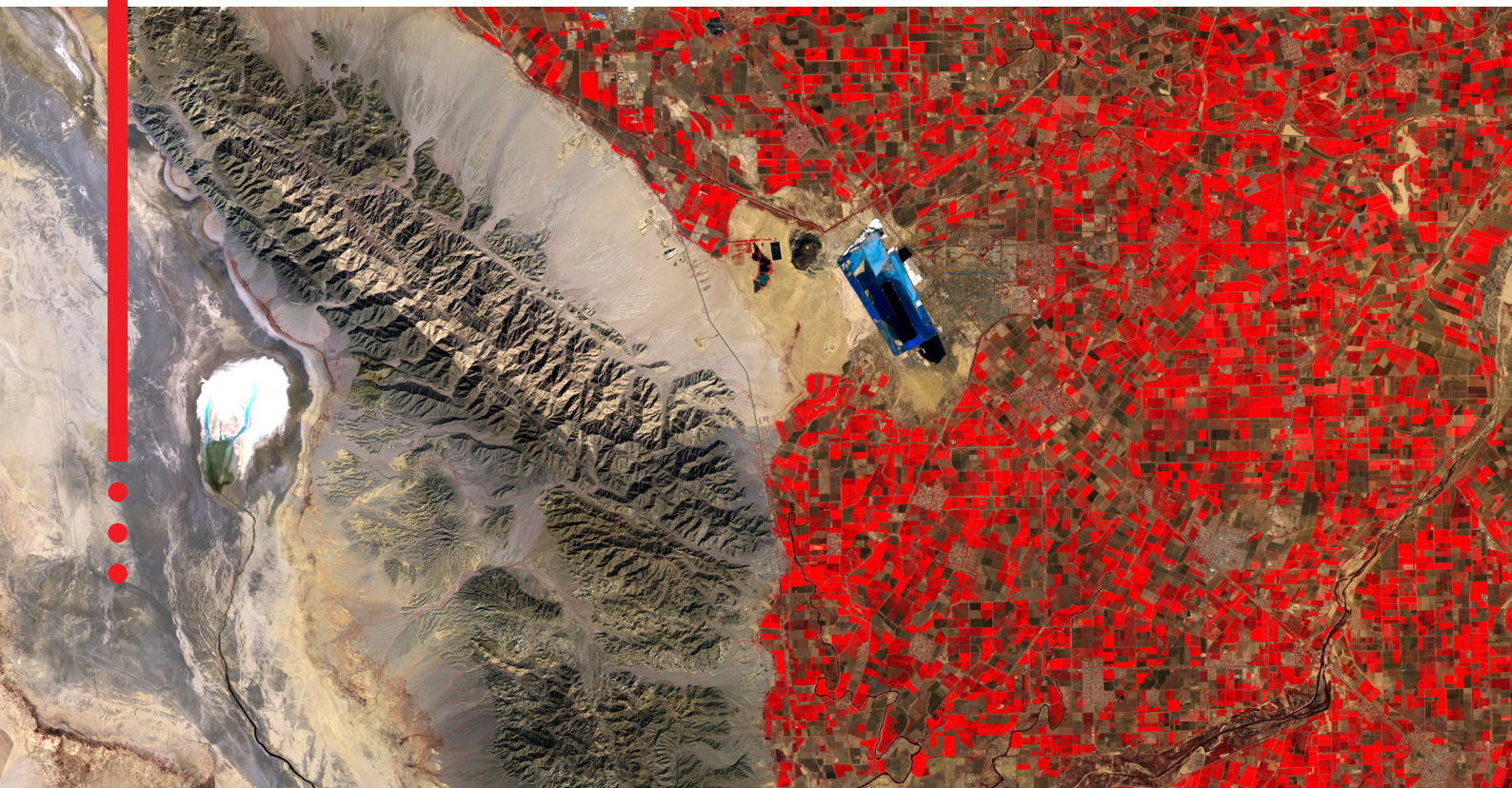


# GRIDs Network Services

UNEP Environmental Data Centres in support to  
environmental governance and policies



**UN**  
environment  
programme



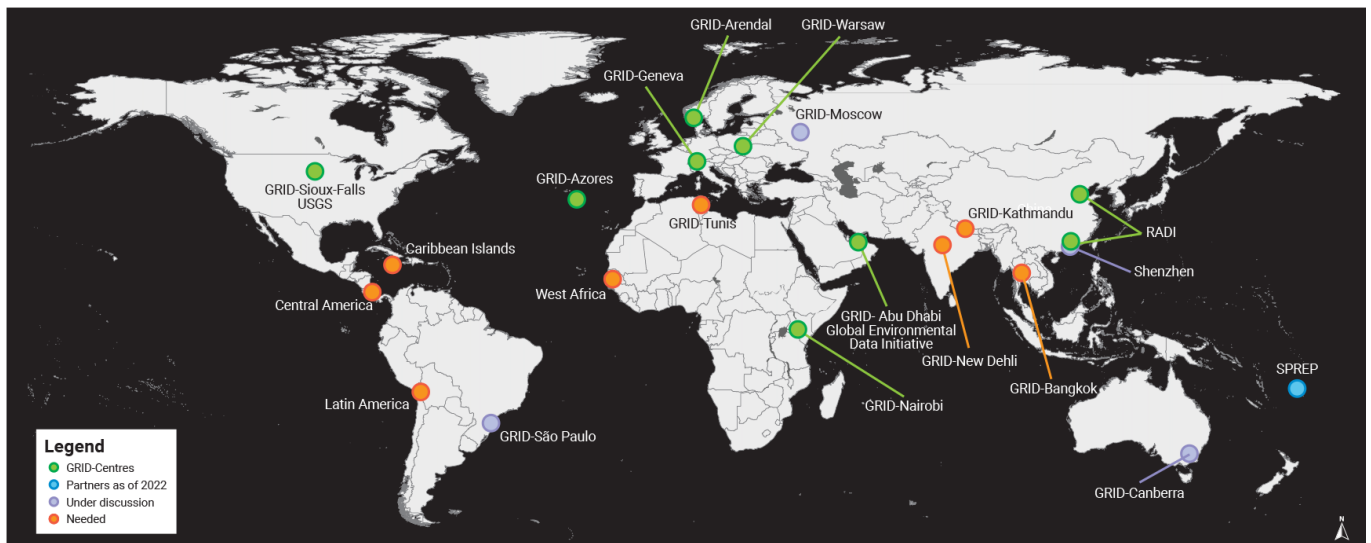
## The GRID Centres

One of UNEP's key roles is to keep the World Environment under review for enhancing the science-policy interface and endorsement of the Global Environment Outlook. In this context, a resolution asked UNEP to upscale its data strategy during the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi (11 - 15 March 2019). This is where the **UNEP network of GRID Centres** comes into play for transforming data into information and support UNEP with analytics since their creation in 1985.

### What are the GRID Centres?

The Global Resource Information Database (GRID) is a worldwide network of environmental data centres created by UNEP in the mid-1980s. GRID-Centres are made of a team of data scientists who on top of their technical expertise also fully understand the UNEP mandates, thus helping to bring the most relevant data and information. The main functions of a GRID-Centre are to acquire data, transforming them into information and knowledge about the state of the world's environment in a timely and understandable manner, before disseminating these to support environmental governance and policies. GRID-Centres handle and analyse geospatial and statistical data on environmental and natural resource issues through Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remotely sensed imagery, in situ or statistical data. They process, integrate, disseminate and communicate geographic information via interoperable data platforms (webservices and APIs), through other on-line technologies including interactive graphs or maps as well as via contributions to reports on various topic related to the environment. In short, GRID-Centres provide reliable environmental knowledge based on evidence. There are **8 formal GRID centres**, namely GRID-Geneva, GRID-Arendal, GRID-Warsaw, GRID-Sioux Falls, RADI (The Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth), GRID-Nairobi, GRID-Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative, and the Atlantic International Research Centre (AIR Centre) as most recent GRID center at UNEP, while several others are under discussion. These centres may have different institutional organization: GRID-Geneva is within the UNEP Science Division, other are foundations or NGOs. Despite their different structure or legal status, all of them are working together with several other partners, forming the spine of the **"One Global Partnership"**, supporting UNEP to transform big data into information and knowledge for sustainable development and humanitarian action at the global, regional and national levels.

<https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment-programme/why-does-un-environment-programme-matter/global-resource-information>



Network of GRID-Centres



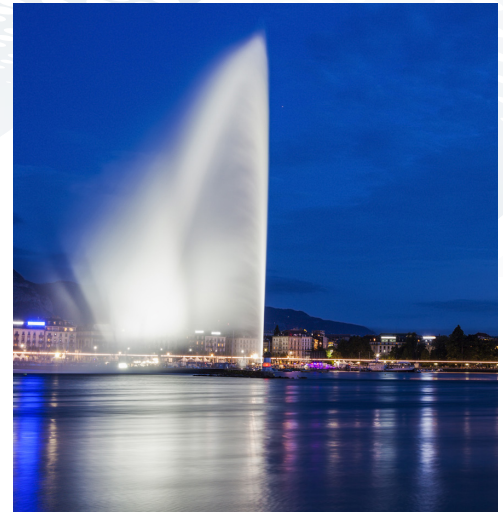
## GRID-Geneva

### Description

UNEP/GRID-Geneva was established in 1985 and is the oldest GRID-Centre still in place. It is located in the UNEP Europe's building (2nd UNEP hub after Nairobi), in the international Geneva home to many UN agencies headquarters. Institutionally, it is a partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) and the University of Geneva (UNIGE) that employs more than 20 environment data scientists. GRID-Geneva sits within the Big Data Branch of the UNEP Science Division.

### Mandate

GRID-Geneva is the UNEP centre for analytics. It has the mandate to supply UNEP with most relevant and up to date environmental data, information and knowledge to support the environmental assessments and reporting, including foresights of emerging environmental problems and threats, as well as to facilitate access to environmental data and information and build related capacities for improved data/information management and environmental decision-making.



Geneva, Switzerland: Photo © Shutterstock.com

### Core Competencies

GRID-Geneva's scientists can process satellite imagery using remote sensing software, create models from geospatial data using Geographical Information Systems (GIS), generate interactive maps and graphs for automatic updates. GRID-Geneva is also specialized in the design and maintenance of data platforms for supporting UNEP (e.g. the World Environment Situation Room), Ramsar and many other organisations and environmental conventions. GRID-Geneva's scientists also publish scientific articles and give conferences, capacity building and teaching activities about environmental issues / solutions, or about Data Science.

### Flagship Activities in Support to UNEP

GRID-Geneva coordinates various activities to support UNEP's mission, such as:

- The UNEP's **World Environment Situation Room**, development of on-line tools for interactive data visualisation.
- The continuous development of the **MapX**, an on-line interactive software for geospatial data created by GRID-Geneva.
- The development of interactive graphs and underlying near-real time data on **Essential Climate Variables**, as well as aggregation of data on the fly (e.g. from satellite imagery to trends, from sub-national to national, regional, continental or global levels).
- Generation of complex GIS models, e.g. on flood, tropical cyclones, role of ecosystems for disaster risk reduction, or in support of SDGs, such as on land degradation.
- Big Earth Observations Data through data Cubes (e.g. **the Swiss Data Cube**).
- Support to UNEP publications such as Emerging Environmental Issues – **Foresights, Global Environment Outlook (GEO) assessments, sand and sustainability**.
- Support to International Agreed Environmental Goals (IAEG), such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, Ramsar or the **Minamata Convention** or in support to SDGs.
- Support for on-line reporting on environmental assessment.

### Contact

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## GRID-Arendal

### Description

GRID-Arendal is a non-profit environmental communications centre based in Norway. We transform environmental data into innovative, science-based information products and provide capacity-building services that enable better environmental governance. We aim to inform and activate a global audience and motivate decision-makers to effect positive change. Our vision is a society that understands, values, and protects the environment on which it depends.

A major focus for GRID-Arendal is supporting fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris climate agreement, and other regional and international commitments. Our work is organised into programmes on Polar & Climate, Marine Environment, Waste & Marine Litter, and Transboundary Governance & Environmental Crime, supported by a Communications, Technology & Innovation team.



Arendal, Norway: Photo © GRID-Arendal

### Mandate

GRID-Arendal was established in 1989 by the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment to support environmentally sustainable development by collaborating with the United Nations Environment Programme and other partners. We work closely with UN agencies, regional organizations, national governments, and other strategic partners to create positive environmental outcomes and impact, particularly in developing countries.

### Core Competencies

- Research and environmental assessment
- Science writing
- Communications strategy and products
  - Book and report publishing, Multimedia storytelling, Social media management
  - Graphic design, Video production, Cartography and infographic design, Website development and hosting, Database development, Spatial/data analysis, Webinar organization and hosting, Special events management, Communications planning, Innovation on strategic use of new communication technologies and techniques, Capacity-building services, Workshops, in person and online and Training courses.

### Contact

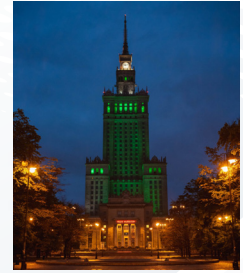
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## GRID-Warsaw

### Description

The GRID-Warsaw Centre was established on 17 September 1991 on the basis of agreement between UNEP and the Polish Ministry of Environment, as the 7th centre created in the GRID network. Officially registered as an NGO (in the structure of the National Foundation for Environmental Protection), cooperates with many national and international partners like public authorities, local governments (cities), scientific institutions, NGOs, companies and others.



Warsaw, Poland: Photo © GRID-Warsaw

### Mandate

GRID-Warsaw's mandate is to support UNEP with the collection, processing and analysis of data for the science-based environmental decision-making, bringing the most relevant knowledge, supporting the environmental assessments and reporting, as well as increasing awareness on the use and benefits of different geospatial data. GRID-Warsaw's mandate covers also broadly understood environmental education, addressed to various groups of recipients.

### Core Competencies

GRID-Warsaw's core expertise covers:

- Processing geospatial data (advanced analysis) using Geographic Information System (GIS) to produce reliable information supporting environmental management
- Creation of dedicated, thematic geoportals
- Creation of interactive maps and charts
- Environmental storytelling with the use of story maps
- Environmental reporting
- Environmental education

### Flagship Activities in Support to UNEP

- GRID-Warsaw created several story maps for the World Environment Situation Room presented at the UNEA-3 and UNEA-4
- Elaborated a number of UNEP Foresight Briefs
- Supported elaboration of the UNEP's flagship Global Environment Outlook (GEO) and other environmental assessments• Developed a pilot version of the digital GEO-6 with interactive maps and charts, for chapters
- Created the 1st version of the Carpathian Countries Integrated Biodiversity Information System (CCIBIS) Geoportal

GRID-Warsaw is actively promoting the UNEP mission in Poland by:

- Presenting UNEP's environmental reports to the broad audience
- Hosting the World Environment Day (WED) and initiating on that day a dedicated Green Ribbon campaign promoting the WED's theme till the end of each year
- Initiating the Climate Leadership Programme as a direct response to the resolution (UNEP/EA.4/.5) 'Solving Environmental Problems Through Sustainable Business Practices'
- Initiating the Re:Generation Programme directly related to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

The SDGs Partnership 'Together for the Environment', created by the GRID-Warsaw in 2016 brings together over 70 institutions in Poland.

### Contact

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## GRID-Sioux Falls

### Description

The North American node of UNEP's Global Resource Information Database (GRID), designated as GRID-Sioux Falls, is located at the **Earth Resources Observation and Science (EROS)** Center of the United States Geological Survey in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, USA. GRID-Sioux Falls has been operational since 1991 and functions as a partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

GRID-Sioux Falls has supported the creation of:

- Environmental change hotspots, an interactive OpenStreetMap presentation of satellite change pairs and storylines,
- The "Atlas of Our Changing Environment" publications (12), ranging from "One Planet, Many People" to "Africa Mountains Atlas", and
- A series of "Alerts" on emerging global environmental issues.

### Mandate

Support UNEP-GRID with processing and analysis of satellite imagery to depict environmental changes globally (satellite change pairs); provide capacity building to scientists from developing countries

### Core Competencies

Remote Sensing; geospatial data analysis; geographic information systems

### Flagship Activities in Support to UNEP

Environmental change hotspots (interactive presentation of satellite change pairs and storylines); "Atlas of Our Changing Environment" publications; Global Environmental Alert Service (series of briefings)

### Contact

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Website: <https://na.unep.net/>

The screenshot shows the GRID Sioux Falls website. At the top is the UNEP logo and the text "United Nations Environment Programme environment for development". Below this are three main navigation buttons: "Environmental Change Hotspots", "Atlas of Our Changing Environment", and "Emerging Issues and Alerts". A secondary navigation bar includes links for "About Us", "Reports", "Multimedia", "Data", and "UNEP Live".

The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled "Welcome to GRID Sioux Falls", contains the UNEP logo, a paragraph describing the center's role, and a "What's New" section featuring three items: "Atlas of Africa Energy Resources", "Arab Region Atlas of Our Changing Environment", and "Africa Mountains Atlas". The right column, titled "Featured Environmental Hotspot", features a large satellite image of the Rwenzori Glaciers with a "Show before image" and "Show after image" comparison. Below this is a "More Environmental Hotspots" section with a world map showing various hotspot locations.

## RADI (The Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth)

The Institute of Remote Sensing and Digital Earth (RADI) under the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) was founded in September 2012 through the merging of the Institute of Remote Sensing Applications (IRSA) and the Center for Earth Observation and Digital Earth (CEODE).

RADI has established a Memorandum of Understanding with UNEP in order to collaborate in activities of the production of geospatial information for the GEO (Global Environmental Outlook 6). Also, RADI is collaborating with UNEP technical teams to the interoperability of Digital Earth platforms at China and the Big Data platform of UNEP, the World Environment Situation Room). RADI is working with UNEP to establish a GRID or Collaborating GRID center as part of the GRIDs Network.

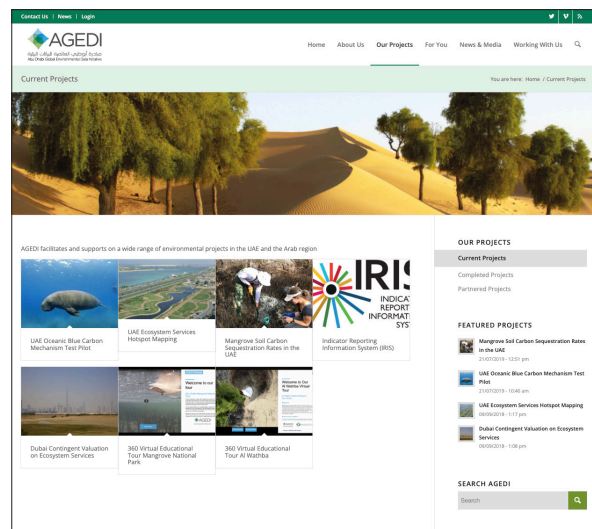
### Contact

Professor Fang Chen ([chenfang@radi.ac.cn](mailto:chenfang@radi.ac.cn), [qiuyb@radi.ac.cn](mailto:qiuyb@radi.ac.cn))

Website: <http://english.irsa.cas.cn/>



## GRID-AGEDI (Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative)



The Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative (AGEDI), headquartered in Abu Dhabi, was launched by the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi and United Nations Environment Programme at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. AGEDI's mission is to facilitate the access to quality environmental data that equips policymakers with actionable, timely information to inform and guide critical decisions towards a sustainable future. Recent initiatives include:

- The Indicator Reporting Information System (IRIS) is an AGEDI programme that is being implemented by the AGEDI partners EAD and UNEP's Science Division Technical teams at Nairobi. IRIS has been deployed around the work in several applications and use cases;
- The 'Eye on Earth' initiative which has mobilized a worldwide community of more than 5,000 members by means of three international Summits and through hosting 50 pioneering international online seminars.

### Contact

Excellency Ahmed Baharoon - [ahmed.baharoon@ead.gov.ae](mailto:ahmed.baharoon@ead.gov.ae)

Website: <https://agedi.org>





The World Environment Situation Room Unit within the Big Data Branch of UNEP has 2 staff members with Geospatial capabilities and skills and 2 other staff members with programming and environmental data management experience. The Regional Office for Africa has 2 staff members with Geospatial capabilities and skills and 2 more staff members with Environmental Data analyses competences and experience. In collaboration the Science Division, the Regional Office for Africa of UNEP has been collaborating in several initiatives:

- The Africa Atlas
- The implementation of the WESR Common Country Analysis project supporting the UN Reform and the UN Development Cooperation Framework
- The implementation of Science Policy advice to Africa Countries

Through an internal written agreement between these 2 entities, internal to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), GRID Nairobi is being established to become a center part of the GRIDs Network.



Nairobi, Kenya: Photos © Shutterstock.com

### Contact:

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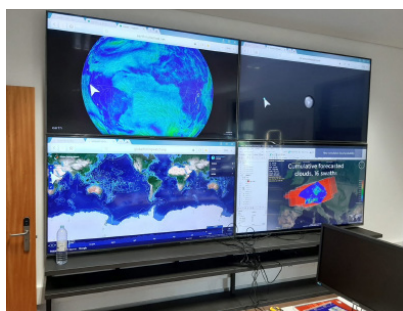


## Atlantic International Research Centre (AIR Centre) as new GRID Node at UNEP

The Atlantic International Research Centre (AIR Centre) is an international non-profit organization for the development of scientific and technological applications in the Atlantic region, paying special attention to the study of ocean-space interactions and the development of sustainability solutions. The AIR Centre, headquartered on Terceira Island - Azores, is established as a distributed network which already includes several countries in the Americas (Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, United States). Europe (Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, Norway), and Africa (South Africa, Nigeria, Angola, Namibia, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe).



The AIR Centre's mission includes activities in areas of enormous scientific, economic and social impact, such as coastal erosion, protection of bays and estuaries, or mitigation of natural disasters. To carry out its mission, the AIR Centre has deployed an Earth Observation Laboratory at its headquarters on Terceira Island. Thanks to a Memorandum of Collaboration with the European Space Agency, signed in 2019, the AIR Centre hosts the ESA Lab@Azores, an open platform of collaboration which is embedded within ESA as part of its ESA Lab@Initiative.



The AIR Centre EO Lab has already started more than 20 projects in consortium with entities from associated countries (companies, Universities, Research Centres), won in international competitions (national, European and intercontinental programs) on issues related to the oceans such as desalination, off-shore renewable energy, protection of marine ecosystems, detection of plastics in the oceans from satellite, ports of the future, coastal cities, aquaculture, etc.

The AIR Centre EO Lab is using extensively Copernicus data, but in addition a Direct Receiving Station has been deployed at its premises for real time acquisition of data from direct broadcast satellites like Terra, Aqua, Suomi-NPP, JPSS-1 (NOAA 20) and FengYun3A/B/C/D. In addition, the AIR Centre is also one of the shareholders of the Earth Observation satellite operator GEOSAT, which operates the satellites GEOSAT 1 and GEOSAT 2 providing unique very high resolution (down to 75 cm spatial resolution) images of the planet to help developing scientific projects and technological applications towards sustainability and help solving the global challenges that we are facing. An EO Data Centre has been deployed at AIR Centre to store the received EO data and to make it available to all the network in real time and to UNEP as a new node of its GRID.

<http://data.unep.org>

Contact: alexandre.caldas@un.org

