

User preparation for new generation satellites including SATURN, VLab and critical transition issues

HLPP reference: 5.3

The online portal SATURN (SATellite User Readiness Navigator) was launched for public access in June 2014 and now provides up-to-date information supporting user readiness activities, primarily for Himawari-8 and GOES-R. Preliminary content is available for MTG, Elektro-L and FY-4. Continued support from the task team of CGMS focal points to develop and maintain the SATURN content remains vital to ensure its currency.

The initial scope of SATURN has been the new generation of GEO satellites, but it is planned for 2015 to extend the scope of the portal to the core meteorological satellites in low-earth orbit: NPP/JPSS from NOAA, Metop from EUMETSAT, FY-3 from CMA and (if feasible) Meteor-M from Roshydromet.

To support and guide satellite operators and users in their respective preparation activities, a Reference User Readiness Project has been developed, and is presented in detail. The Project provides a typical breakdown of user readiness activities and a timeline of deliverables that are needed from satellite development programmes to support user readiness activities

In collaboration with the VLab and the COMET/MetEd programme, online training material on aspects of Himawari-8 and GOES-R has been made available through SATURN in English and Spanish (where available). The VLab strategy 2015-2019 places high emphasis on building capacity in understanding and exploiting data from the new generation satellites (see WMO WP-12 under item I.1).

The WMO Space Programme is continuing to develop SATURN and the Reference User Readiness Project, supported by experts from the WMO Expert Team IPET-SUP and by the CGMS focal points.

Action/Recommendation proposed:

- CGMS members operating new-generation GEO satellites to continue and strengthen their support to the SATURN portal
- CGMS members to provide review comments on the Reference User Readiness Project, noting that the Project will be presented to CGMS-44 for endorsement as CGMS best practice
- NOAA, EUMETSAT, CMA and ROSHYDROMET to appoint/confirm points of contact for including information on LEO satellites in the SATURN

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1 INTRODUCTION

It is a priority of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Coordination Group for Meteorological Satellites (CGMS) to support the user community in light of the opportunities and challenges associated with the new generation of meteorological geostationary satellites being launched by NOAA, ISRO, JMA, CMA, KMA, ROSHYDROMET and EUMETSAT before the end of this decade. Satellite data users and WMO members require timely, technical information on the new satellite generation to exploit its potential operational benefits and socio-economic value.

The WMO Space Programme, with the support of the CGMS member agencies, has established the online portal SATURN (SATellite User Readiness Navigator, <http://www.wmo-sat.info/satellite-user-readiness>) to provide a single point of access for all information pertinent to the preparation of the global user community for the new generation of satellites. SATURN was launched publicly at the occasion of the 66th WMO Executive Council in June 2014.

The initial scope of SATURN has been the new generation of GEO satellites, but it is planned for 2015 to extend the scope of the portal to the core meteorological satellites in low-earth orbit: NPP/JPSS from NOAA, Metop from EUMETSAT, FY-3 from CMA and (if feasible) Meteor-M from Roshydromet.

The continued support of CGMS members through the established task team of agency focal points remains essential.

Focal points have been nominated for the new generation of GEO satellites from China Meteorological Administration, EUMETSAT, Japan Meteorological Agency, NOAA, Korea Meteorological Administration, India Meteorological Department, and ROSHYDROMET (Russia).

As of April 2015, up-to-date content is being provided for Himawari-8 and GOES-R, and preliminary content is available for Elektro-L, FY-4 and MTG.

To support and guide satellite operators and users in their respective preparation activities, a Reference User Readiness Project has also been developed, and is presented in detail in this paper.

The WMO Space Programme is continuing to develop the Reference User Readiness Project, supported by experts from the WMO Expert Team IPET-SUP and by the agency focal points. CGMS members are invited to provide further review comments to the Project. At CGMS-44, it is planned to submit the Reference User Readiness Project for adoption as CGMS best practice.

2 REFERENCE USER READINESS PROJECT

The WMO guidelines on user preparation for the new generation of meteorological satellites adopted at CBS-XV in 2012 urges each of the NMHSs and other operational user organizations to:

“Establish a user readiness project focused on the introduction of new satellite data streams into operations (to be initiated ~5 years prior to launch)”

One of the main constraints for the planning of a user readiness project is the timely availability of information, specifications, and data and tools used in satellite system development. Therefore, to establish a User Readiness Project, it is important to consider in detail the lifecycle of satellite system development and its relation to the user readiness planning.

It is therefore crucial, that the satellite development entities and operators provide detailed and up-to-date plans for their activities conducted in support of User Readiness Projects.

Even though user readiness is explicitly considered for ongoing satellite system development projects such as for Himawari-8/9 or GOES-R, satellite operators do not systematically provide up-to-date planning schedules of deliverables to the user community.

Therefore, the WMO Space Programme has analysed how the typical cycle of satellite system development relates to typical User Readiness Projects, and the outcome of this analysis is a summary of best practices and a generic schedule. The generic schedule indicates at what time relative to planned launch what information should be available in order to both satisfy the user preparation schedule and respect the constraints of satellite system development.

2.1 User activities

2.1.1 Budgeting and planning

Budgeting and planning is of paramount importance and needs to start early. A new generation satellite system can be in some cases the driver of significant infrastructure upgrades; performance requirements in terms of data acquisition, storage, network, etc. should thus be known many years in advance in order to incorporate the necessary upgrades in the long-term evolution and investment plans. Realistic schedule margins and other provisions should be used to avoid planning difficulties for example due to launch delays.

A main objective for a user organization like an NMHS, is to protect the investment made into existing operational programmes, and to understand early where additional investments are necessary or unavoidable in order to achieve readiness for the new satellite system. Therefore, early information about investment drivers is crucial for budgeting and planning purposes.

2.1.2 R&D

In this context, R&D refers to the phase of activities that prepare the application of new generation satellite data from the user perspective. This typically includes development of NWP data assimilation methods using the new generation satellite data where needed, or

development of new or specially tailored products for specific application areas, for instance by centres such as the EUMETSAT Satellite Application Facilities. These activities typically include analysis of the effects of instrument spectral response functions (SRF), field of view (FOV), and the radiative transfer models used to simulate instruments. The planning of such activities depends to a large extent on the degree of novelty of the instrument. If it is an upgraded version of an existing series, the lead times can be shortened considerably and some steps (e.g. simulated data) can be dropped completely. For totally new instruments (e.g. MTG-IRS) however, a first-guess SRF can be useful even earlier than two years before launch date (L-24 months) and for these, simulated data would also be very useful.

2.1.3 Data handling development and testing

This activity includes design and procurement of new satellite reception systems, as well as upgrades to terrestrial network access (Internet and RMDCN), needed for handling increased data rates. The activity would also encompass upgrades to observational databases, short- and long-term archives, as well as to internal networks and general IT capacity for visualization, monitoring and processing.

2.1.4 Data processing development and testing

All aspects of the processing software of satellite observations need to be adapted and potentially upgraded to accommodate data from the new satellite. This may include:

- Local processing chain of direct broadcast data into L0 and L1 products
- Data conversion into intermediate local formats for observations databases and archiving
- Data monitoring and assimilation into NWP models,
- Processing chain for local generation of higher-level products for specific applications
- Integration into the operational user environment, including for instance integrated visualization applications (with satellite, radar, surface and altitude observations and model outputs) for forecasters.

For instance, the adaptation of NWP assimilation to the new satellite systems require a long lead time and has specific requirements regarding availability of instrument and product data (see deliverables and timeline under item 2.4).

The planning of such activities varies widely according to the needs and capabilities of the user organization (e.g., NMHS).

2.1.5 Training

Different training subjects and different target groups for training exist and it is important to identify the different categories of needed training as they have different time scales and require different levels of information about the new satellite system.

Identified training subjects are:

- Equipment operation and maintenance
- Interpretation of L1 data from satellite payload instruments including:
 - Imagery interpretation
 - Passive sounder data usage
 - Active instrument usage
- Use of software tools (for processing, analysis, and assimilation)
- Derived L2 product utilization and interpretation

- The physical basis of remote sensing, in particular as it applies to new instruments

Target groups for training are:

- Trainers (using the “train the trainers” approach)
- User readiness project managers
- Operational forecasters
- User communities in NWP and other application areas
- Organizational managers
- Technical support personnel
- R&D personnel

The approach for organizing training depends very much on the needs and capabilities of the user organization (NMHS) and on the organizational relationship between satellite operators and users. With the advancement of e-learning technology, emphasis is clearly shifting from long-term planned classroom training towards “just-in-time-training” based on webinars, self-study online training etc.

The increasing importance of continuing training activities after launch must be emphasized. Training needs to cover critical real weather situations for all seasons and it must be based on the real characteristics of the satellite systems. Emphasis should be given to training formats that can be integrated into ongoing operations, i.e. short training modules for “as it occurs” training of operational forecasters on or between shifts. This approach is for example reflected in the NOAA GOES-R training planning (Figure below), extending baseline training activities until 1-2 years after launch.

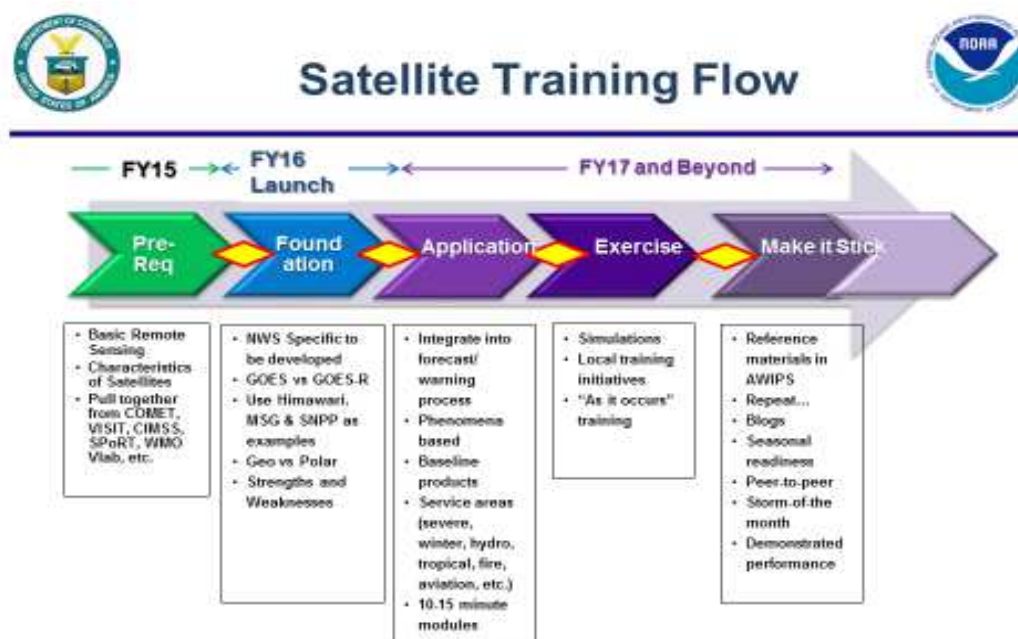


Figure 1: GOES-R Training Plan

The new generation GEO satellites have strong similarities in instrumentation (e.g., similar spectral, temporal, and spatial resolution of imagers; lightning mappers), and therefore there are substantial potential benefits to users and to satellite operators in developing common training material and foster common development of applications.

In collaboration with the VLab and the COMET/MetEd programme, SATURN now links to online training material on Himawari-8 and GOES-R, in English and Spanish (where available). For example, the COMET/MetEd module “Advanced Himawari Imager (AHI): What’s Different from GOES-R ABI” (http://www.meted.ucar.edu/satmet/himawari_ahi/) is very effective in comparing these two imagers, and this module (https://www.meted.ucar.edu/goes_r/abi_es/) explains the GOES-R ABI in Spanish. Translation of more training material is planned and a high priority for WMO and the VLab.

The VLab strategy 2015-2019 places high emphasis on building capacity among WMO Members in understanding and exploiting data from the new generation satellites (the strategy is presented for adoption by CGMS in WMO WP-12 under item I.1). The VLab will play a key role over the coming years in addressing the training needs of meteorologists with regard to the new generation of satellites, and strong support from CGMS members will be required.

2.1.6 Capacity-building

Capacity-building is vital for ensuring that all WMO members can maximize their capability to exploit the value of the new generation of satellite data. Such activities can take the form of bilateral NMHS partnerships, regional collaborative mechanisms like the RA I Dissemination Expert Group and the EUMETSAT User Forum in Africa, the RA II WIGOS project on satellite utilization, or major projects providing technical and scientific infrastructure and training for less developed WMO members (e.g. AMESD and MESA).

2.1.7 Contributions to Calibration/Validation

Participation of NWP centres in instrument Cal/Val activities have become standard practice both for LEO and GEO satellites. Monitoring of first-guess minus observation (FG-OBS) departures for L1 products are an important contribution to the Cal/Val activities of satellite operators.

2.2 Satellite system development phases

The life cycle of space projects is typically divided into 7 phases, as follows:

- Phase 0 – Mission analysis/needs identification
- Phase A – Feasibility
- Phase B – Preliminary Definition
- Phase C – Detailed Definition
- Phase D – Qualification and Production
- Phase E – Utilization
- Phase F – Disposal

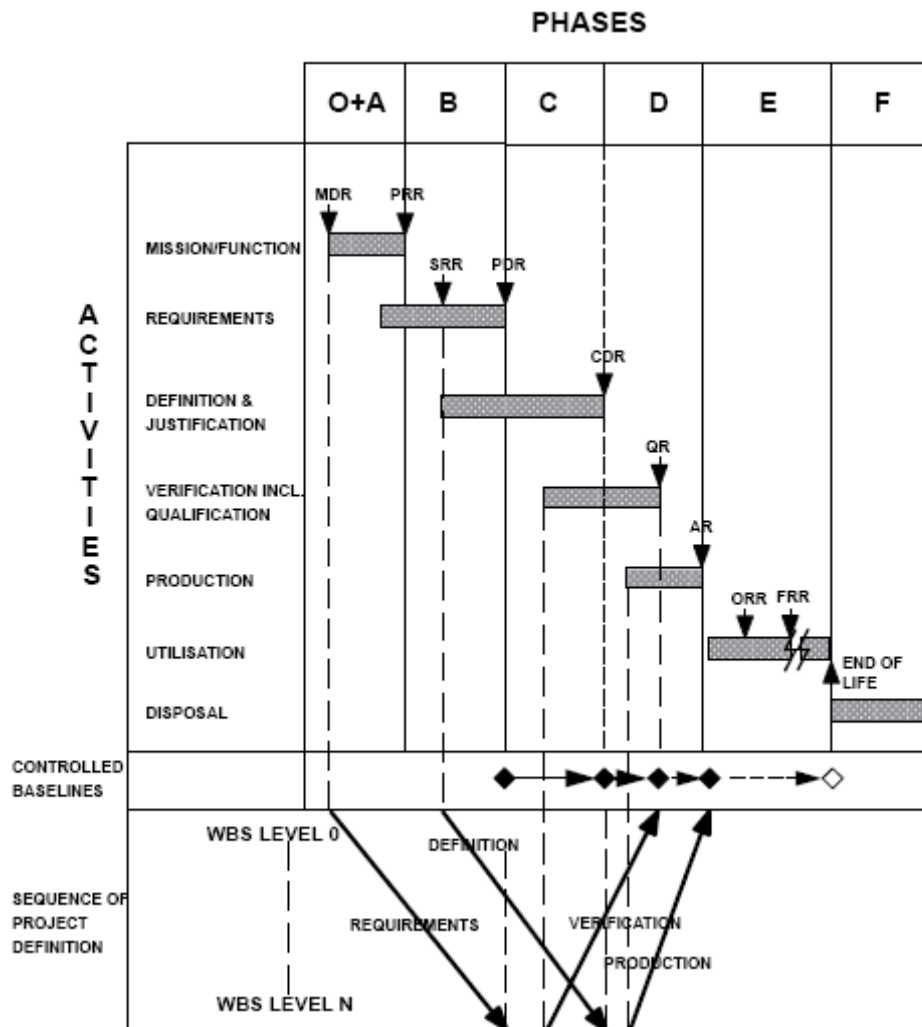


Figure 2: Reference satellite system development lifecycle according to European Cooperation for Space Standardization (ECSS)

Phase C (detailed definition) is concluded with the System Critical Design Review (CDR), at which point the definition of the system (satellite and ground segment) will be complete down to the lowest level, and after which full production (Phase D) of the system will start. If development follows a nominal schedule, the System CDR will take place 3 years before launch. Phase E (utilization) starts with the shipment of the satellite to the launch site and the start of launch preparations, and is subdivided into phase E1 (launch and commissioning), typically lasting until 6-12 months after launch, and phase E2 (routine operations).

The most significant consequence of this lifecycle with respect to the user community is that the system specification and other information made available to the user community before the System CDR (i.e., at the end of Phase C) will be based on requirements, whereas deliverables based on the real characteristics of the system will only become available after this time, during phase D and E1.

This lifecycle reflects actual experience from MSG and COMS, and also the status and planning for GOES-R and MTG. Variations do exist for specific programmes; for example the planning for Himawari-8 development was somewhat compressed compared to this: the

System Critical Design Review was completed in January 2012, only 30 months before the planned launch in summer 2014 (the satellite was successfully launched on 7 October 2014).

2.3 Deliverables to user activities

2.3.1 Instrument characterization

Details of instrument characterization and performance are of general interest to the user community, but are particularly critical for the adaptation of NWP assimilation of L1 data. Initially these data are based on instrument specifications, but following on-ground instrument testing, actual instrument characterization data will become available from the satellite manufacturer based on this testing. The provision of these data from industry to the satellite operator is generally regulated in the overall satellite contract, and subject to a significant set of contractual constraints.

The new generation of satellites carries advanced instruments, employing complex focal planes and multiple detectors. The transformation of on-ground characterisation data recorded at detector chain level into overall instrument channel characterisation data is a particular challenge for these advanced instruments (e.g., in case of the MTG Infra-Red Sounder).

It is planned in cooperation with relevant expert teams (primarily GSICS) to develop a standard checklist for pre-launch instrument characterization.

2.3.2 Product specifications

This includes scientific specifications of the product algorithms, detailed specification of formats for dissemination as well as on-demand requests, information on timeliness and expected data volumes, all for both L1 and L2 products.

There is clearly a need for more standardized approach to description of both L1 and L2 products, possibly through the development of standard templates for the product description.

2.3.3 Data access mechanism specifications

This includes specifications of mechanisms for Direct Broadcast and DVB-based dissemination. These specifications are required for procurement of all user reception systems.

Systems requirements for Direct Broadcast reception systems, including both antennas, front-end components and computer systems for acquisition and L1 processing need to be available to users in time for starting procurements activities, typically 3 years before launch. The processing systems requirements are becoming increasingly demanding with the complex DB processing for the new generation of satellites; the impact on users systems is significant.

Also required are specifications of offline data access mechanisms, including archive retrieval and other on-demand means.

Where user registration is required for access to products and services, detailed description of the user registration process is required before launch, so that the registration process can be exercised by the users already during the commissioning phase.

2.3.4 Software tools and test data

L1 pre-processing software is needed for the procurement of the user data processing functions, but realistically is only available from an operator after Ground Segment acceptance. Any contracts for procurement of data processing systems need to take this need into account.

Different categories of test data exists, with different life cycles. The categorization used in the SATURN portal is the following:

- Synthetic data: No scientific value, but realistic sizes and formats. Used for user dataflow testing
- Proxy data: Data simulated by forward Radiative Transfer Model (RTM) calculations. Proxy data are used to test processing and visualisation tools. These data are produced based on NWP model output, they generally do not contain realistic spatial structure and temporal variability.
- Heritage data: Actual data sets from relevant precursor instruments, e.g., 2.5 min data from Meteosat-10 for MTG-FCI, 1-min super rapid scanning data from GOES for GOES-R ABI, or IASI/AIRS data for FY-4A GIIRS and MTG-IRS. Heritage data are used in early training on capabilities and application areas. It is also possible to use heritage data to construct test data similar to proxy data by adding RTM simulated data for channels to the ones present in heritage mission or by using interpolation in time and space.
- Pre-operational data: Real satellite data generated as part of the commissioning activities, but before full validation has been completed.

The operators should provide all of these categories of test data, use consistent terminology to describe them, as well as provide software tools provided for the use of test data, both during pre-launch development and during post-launch commissioning activities.

2.3.5 Operations plans and schedules

For ensuring user readiness, it is of high importance that both long-term operations plans, as well as routine operations schedules are made available before the start of routine operations. This includes the following elements:

- Fly-out plan for overall satellite programme, including planning for launches, orbital positions and end-of-life dates, including information about overlap with existing operational satellites
- Routine operations schedule, including areas of coverage for flexible scanning operational scenarios and information on the process for scenario switching, e.g., activation of Super Rapid Scanning operations for severe storms and tropical cyclone tracking.
- If appropriate, conditions for user input to the operations schedule (e.g. requests for special mode operations)
- Planning for routine spacecraft maintenance activities, like orbital manoeuvres, seasonal spacecraft re-orientation (yaw-flip), instrument decontamination etc.

- Schedules for activation of LEO direct broadcast where applicable
- Schedules for routine dissemination for both direct broadcast and re-broadcast via telecommunications satellites.

Details on recommended due-by-dates are provided in the timeline below.

2.3.6 User Notification and Feedback

It is essential that the satellite operator establish 2-way communications channels to the user community: for providing general and specific information, and to allow users to make enquiries and provide other feedback during the preparations phase. Such channels are also necessary to provide routine user support starting from the commissioning phase.

Such communication should include Regional satellite user coordination mechanisms (such as the Coordination Group on Satellite Data Requirements for Region III and IV; RAIDEG), regional user conferences (such as the Asia-Oceania Meteorological Satellite Users Conference) and training events (such as the GOES-R Event Week), as well provide support for enquiries and feedback from individual users.

2.3.7 Training resources

For new satellite systems, the provision of training material from satellite operators is crucial. Online training resources are of increasing importance, and give the possibility of dynamic adaptation when new information about the satellite and its applications becomes available. It is also essential to capitalize on the contributions of the user community and promote training resources that are made available by user groups. The WMO-CGMS VLab plays a key role in developing and delivering online training material to users worldwide in several languages.

2.3.8 Other deliverables

For many applications, it is important to have the set of fundamental constants that have been used to derive satellite data and products, and satellite operators should make this available to users. It is planned to propose a common standard to be used by CGMS operators, e.g., the list published by the US National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

2.4 Timeline for the Reference User Readiness Project

The table below shows the overall timeline of user preparedness activities, and the planning for the different deliverables from the satellite system development needed to support these activities.

Each user deliverable in the reference project has an associated sub-category in SATURN, so that the portal will provide up-to-date links to all deliverables when these become available from the satellite system development.

CGMS-43 WMO-WP-03
8 May 2015

Time relative to Launch Date (“L”)	Satellite System development Activities and Milestones	User readiness Project Activities and Milestones	Needed deliverables from operators
L-5y (years) -> L-4y	Ground Segment Development Phase C	Initiation of user (e.g., NMHS) readiness project. Initiation of cooperative projects addressing needs of less developed WMO members.	Overall specifications of user segment, including high-level definition of migration path from existing user segment. Preliminary schedule for deliverables to users
L-4y -> L-3y	System Critical Design Review	Identification of drivers for investment and running cost. Planning and allocation of human resources and budgets for investments and running costs. Establishment of prioritized data requirements, as clear priorities for current and future products allow the best preparations to be made for establishing data access and delivery capabilities. Initial training on capabilities for trainers and decision makers.	General description of instruments General description of NRT dissemination mechanisms. Detailed specifications of L2 and L1 products to be available at start of operations (Day-1 products). Heritage test data. Plans for evolution of products after start of operations (Day-2 products).
L-3y -> L-2y	System Production On-ground characterization of instruments	Design of new reception system. Design of communications network changes, including GTS/RMDCN capacity. Design of new data handling and processing functions. Training on specific application areas, based on proxy data.	Specifications of instruments and their performance, including planned SRFs, noise, FOV size. Proxy test data Detailed specifications of NRT dissemination mechanisms. Detailed specifications of Direct Broadcast (DB), including frequency and signal characteristics and hardware specifications for antennas, front-end components and computer systems for acquisition and processing of DB data. General description of offline data access. Data/product volume estimates. Data/product format definitions. Data access conditions (e.g. licensing, key units, etc.). L1 pre-processing software for DB (preliminary version) Establish and use two-way communication channels for user enquiries

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8 May 2015**

Time relative to Launch Date (“L”)	Satellite System development Activities and Milestones	User readiness Project Activities and Milestones	Needed deliverables from operators
L-2y -> L-1y	Ground System acceptance	Procurement, installation and acceptance testing of systems. Software design for data processing, including NWP ingest.	Full pre-flight instrument characterization information (including SRFs, noise) Information on radiative transfer models (e.g., RTTOV) that support instruments Synthetic test data (including L1B data format details, Sat ID, navigation information) Continuous periods test dissemination of synthetic test data. Long-term operations plan. Planning for data exchange to serve global community.
L-1y -> L-6m	Flight readiness of satellite	End-user training (forecasters)	Start of regular updating of plans for launch and commissioning.
L-6m -> L	Operational System Validation and Launch preparations	Data processing software testing (using proxy data). Technical training on reception systems and other system elements. Data acquisition system testing (using synthetic data).	Proxy data based on on-ground instrument characterization. L2 data format Direct Broadcast software package (if DB available) User documentation for dissemination mechanisms and delivered software tools. Routine operations schedules.
L->L+6m	Satellite In-orbit verification Commissioning of L1 products	Full system and software testing (using pre-operational data). Support to operators CAL/VAL activities, in particular through NWP assimilation.	Early dissemination of un-validated L1 data. Early switch-on of Direct Broadcast Pre-operational L1 data dissemination. In flight characterization of instrument performance. L1 pre-processing software for DB (operational version) Start of routine User Support
L+6m->L+2y	Commissioning of L2 products	Scientific data exploitation (iterative based on increased understanding of real data). Post-launch training based on real data. Declaration of user operational readiness	Operational L1 data dissemination, from both old and new satellites (as long as possible, but minimum until L+1y).

**3 ACTIONS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY
CGMS PLENARY**

- CGMS members operating the new generation of GEO satellites to continue and strengthen the support to the SATURN portal
- CGMS members to review and provide comments to the Reference User Readiness Project, noting that it will be presented to CGMS-44 for endorsement as CGMS best practice
- NOAA, EUMETSAT, CMA and ROSHYDROMET to appoint/confirm points of contact for including LEO satellites in the SATURN