

United Nations Committee of Experts on
Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)

Strengthening Institutional Arrangements on Geospatial Information Management

UN-GGIM: Europe Discussion Note @ 7 October 2021

Eleventh Session of UN-GGIM

At its Eleventh Session (23, 24 and 27 August 2021) the UN-GGIM Committee of Experts discussed the continuing efforts by the Bureau and Secretariat to take strategic and practical actions to **champion and strengthen geospatial information management** and related interlinkages for Member States in line with the mandate of the Committee pursuant to Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution [2016/27](#).

In making [Decision 11/101](#), the Committee of Experts recognized the considerable achievements and increasing importance of UN-GGIM, whose multiple workstreams have had demonstrably positive impacts on both the global geospatial landscape and national development programs over the last ten years, but which **needs to be sustainably resourced** to effectively guide and support Member States in their efforts towards developing and maintaining integrated geospatial information capacities and capabilities going forward.

In this regard, the Committee of Experts:

- a) Welcomed the initiative taken by the Bureau and Secretariat towards the preparation of the timeline, modalities, and main elements of the proposed report of the Committee of Experts to be submitted to the 2022 ECOSOC Session;
- b) Supported the establishment of an ad-hoc task team, comprising the Bureau and ‘friends of the co-Chairs’ of the Committee of Experts, together with additional volunteered resources and expertise offered by Member States, to lead preparations and consult on the draft report, initially guided by the previously provided [Draft Briefing Note](#), in an inclusive and transparent review process;
- c) Entrusted the Bureau and friends of the co-Chairs to finalize the report for the consideration of the Committee prior to its submission to ECOSOC in 2022; and
- d) Emphasized the importance of a close dialogue and open engagement between geospatial information management experts in Member States, their Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York to sensitize them on the tangible value of the Committee of Experts to adequately address issues in national and global geospatial information management, such as amongst others the delivery of the goals of the 2030 Agenda and other missions of the United Nations, the importance of multilateral cooperation in global geospatial information management, and to notify them on the preparations and nature of the report to ECOSOC in 2022.

UN-GGIM Bureau Informal Meeting

On 28 September 2021, the UN-GGIM Bureau met informally to discuss and ‘brainstorm’ the above outcomes from the Eleventh Session of the Committee of Experts. It was agreed that a key leadership task before the Bureau is to prepare, consult, finalize and submit UN-GGIM’s report ‘**Strengthening**

Institutional Arrangements on Geospatial Information Management' on the implementation of Resolution 2016/27 to the 2022 ECOSOC Session. In this regard, several key points were reiterated.

Diplomatic Engagement

This process must be 'country-owned, country-led' and with a significant obligation on Member States to engage their Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Permanent Missions to the UN in New York. There is a need for experts from capitals to understand their national protocols with regards to UN processes, to establish and leverage these diplomatic and political relationships to ensure smooth passage of the report and resolution through ECOSOC.

Drafting the Report

The Bureau and 'friends of the co-Chairs' of the Committee of Experts, together with additional volunteered resources and expertise offered by Member States and supported by the Secretariat, will lead preparations, including timeline, modalities, and main elements, of the report.

The report must be coherent, and key will be what not to put into it. The report should emphasize UN-GGIM's value proposition, what can be offered but would need investing. Address the gap and value proposition in simple and appealing non-technical (diplomatic) language. The report should not be about what to ask for. Rather, a message could be '**time to invest in UN-GGIM**' towards strengthening national geospatial information management arrangements. Giving ourselves a 'pat on the back' for our past achievements will give us a 'good feeling' but is not sustainable, and will not resonate with the diplomats.

Key Messages

As has been discussed several times, the crux will be to determine and agree **what key messages will resonate** with the diplomats and decision-makers. What are the messages, the timeline, and preferred institutional arrangements? The timeline is critical, and we will need to work backwards given there are "UN internal processes" to accommodate. It could be no more than six months. Importantly, any briefing documents must not be technical nor full of details. Rather, they should be strategic, succinct, influential (particularly towards value proposition and benefits) and with simple, understandable language.

As for the messages, we have a lot of the building blocks. Pick key and simple messages wisely that are anchored in policy and the needs of the UN. Why we need geospatial for the global policy concerns. Provide compelling examples of what can be achieved if you had an integrated geospatial infrastructure around the world. This is our offer. We offer a valuable product. But if you want it to be sustained, you will need to invest in it. UN-GGIM can 'bring it all together', creating the nexus for governance, technology, people and processes, providing the human, institutional and physical investments and capacities towards evidence-based policy and decision-making.

Communication

The above elements will require continual communication, engagement, and strong leadership over the coming months. Having appropriate materials and opportunity to "communicate" upwards to the diplomats, and across to our Member States will be critical. This will greatly assist in informing our stakeholders in preparation for the required 'inclusive and transparent review process'. As is demonstrated by this UN-GGIM: Europe Plenary dedicated session on this topic, the regional committees of UN-GGIM are ready to support the process but will need supporting materials such as key messages and talking points. It was agreed that a short 1–2-page 'executive brief' is now an urgency and the Bureau to lead the process. The Bureau and Secretariat have yet to arrive at a stage where there is an understanding of what can be offered, what is needed, what is the 'strengthened' institutional arrangements for UN-GGIM, and what is to be invested in. Views on such options will need to be sought from Member States, beginning with UN-GGIM: Europe.

‘UN-GGIM Looking to the Future’

UN-GGIM: Europe Breakout Sessions, Wednesday 13 October 2021

Looking to the Future.....time to invest in UN-GGIM

The Bureau and friends of the co-Chairs Group will meet at the end of October and have an initial discussion on what are the key messages, what ‘strengthened’ institutional arrangement could be, and how to move forward. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change and lack of global resilience, the vision and mission of UN-GGIM (see below) is now more important than ever, but this needs to be communicated and better understood. The UN-GGIM: Europe Strategy is most timely and welcomed as a key communication tool. The Strategic Leadership pillar is particularly applicable to this discussion.

To assist the friends of the co-Chairs and the report to ECOSOC, inputs from UN-GGIM: Europe will provide a valuable starting context. Guided by the [Draft Briefing Note](#) provided to the Eleventh Session and this Discussion Note, the UN-GGIM: Europe Breakout Sessions is requested to respond to the following 4 questions:

- 1. *What is the overall societal value proposition of geospatial information?***
- 2. *How do you see geospatial information best contributing to our global challenges into the future?***
- 3. *What are the key messages that will resonate with diplomats and decision-makers?***
- 4. *What do you see as the future of UN-GGIM and what we can offer?***

Example Prompts from Bureau Discussions

Geospatial information provides the blueprint of what happens where. Important to connect with the UN’s global agendas: sustainable development (SDGs), humanitarian and peace building, climate change, COVID-19 recovery (build back better), inequality, resilience to disasters, the UN Secretary General’s ‘Our Common Agenda’, etc. All countries want sustainable development, but efforts are not necessarily connected to or leveraging geospatial information. Will have to impress on ECOSOC that strengthening UN-GGIM strengthens national geospatial information management capacities and contributes to achieving sustainable development and a sustainable society as a whole.

Geospatial information can leverage the synergies between the implementation of the SDGs, and other global development agendas. It takes an ‘integrated’ approach to the many interlinkages – based on location. For example, climate change and sustainable development, and recognizing the special challenges and needs facing the most vulnerable countries. Hitch on the 2030 Agenda, climate change, recovery from the pandemic and ‘Our Common Agenda’. Connect how geospatial benefits humanity, environment and economy. Smart connection to key policy agenda. Pandemic and climatic disasters – how does geospatial assist countries to be more resilient. Help governments realize the importance.

Reaffirm our commitment to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in its entirety and to achieve the SDGs as we have entered the Decade of Action and delivery for sustainable development. With SDGs, every country is talking about them, but not connected to geospatial information. This work can be done more efficiently and clearly if we strengthened the geospatial capacity and capabilities of countries. Invest in systems like geodesy, knowledge sharing and human interoperability. The ‘people’ are the minimal cost, but greatest resource. How can we make this strong leap to the SDGs that they immediately see geospatial – to manage, monitor and decide. Begins with geodesy and positioning, right through to emerging technologies and their applications such as artificial intelligence, big data, digital twins, BIM and blockchain. Harnessing science, technology and innovation,

and promoting voluntary technology transfer will transform production and business and bridge the geospatial digital divide.

The UN-GGIM Secretariat needs to be resilient and sustainable. Needs a substantive Secretariat to keep it all together. Justify from a broad programmatic perspective. It is not just servicing an intergovernmental meeting each year. Much more than that. UN-GGIM is a global United Nations program, not just a meeting. The majority of resources are not for servicing the meeting. What do we want and what will it cost? Will doubling the secretariat be more resilient to change? Perhaps, doubling Secretariat staff resources will cost approx. \$1 million a year in additional investment. Do we compute a return on this investment?

There is a dilemma, whether to focus on what we want and the cost, or about a better world enabled by strengthened national geospatial information management through a strengthened global arrangement. What are the building blocks of what we want? What is the vision and world we want with geospatial? Take IGIF for example. How do more countries get to engage and benefit with this. Not just financial resources at the global level, but also at the national level – capacity and capability building and development. Is the Secretariat to be strengthened then – what do we want, and how do we sell the value of the expense. If we do not do this, we will get nothing.

UN-GGIM Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives, 2018-2022

CONTEXT	VISION	<i>Positioning geospatial information to effectively address global challenges</i>				
	MISSION	<i>Operating within agreed policies and institutional arrangements, and as an interconnected global community of practice, provide leadership to ensure that geospatial information and resources are coordinated, maintained, accessible, and able to be leveraged by Member States and society to find sustainable solutions for social, economic and environmental development</i>				
	MANDATED STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	Provide leadership in setting the agenda for the development of global geospatial information and to promote its use to address key global challenges	Provide a forum for coordination and dialogue with and among Member States and relevant international organizations on enhanced cooperation	Provide a platform for the development of effective strategies to build and strengthen national capacity and capability concerning geospatial information, especially in developing countries	Propose work-plans, frameworks and guidelines to promote common principles, policies, methods, standards and mechanisms for the interoperability and use of geospatial data and services	Make joint decisions and set the direction for the production and use of geospatial information within and across national, regional and global policy frameworks

DECADE OF >>> ACTION

Mobilize everyone, everywhere

We will work to create an unstoppable force linked to the Global Goals.

We will identify risks to ensure no one is left behind.

This requires each of us to take action—individually and collectively, locally and globally.

Demand urgency and ambition

We must be the generation to end extreme poverty, win the race against climate change and conquer injustice and gender inequality.

We will hold leaders to account and point to what is possible when action delivers results.

Supercharge ideas to solutions

We will shine a light on solutions that expand access and demonstrate the possibilities of ideas.

We will drive sustainable innovation, financial investments and technology - while making space in our communities and cities for young people to lead.

17 Goals to Transform Our World

The Sustainable Development Goals are a call for action by all countries – poor, rich and middle-income – to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. They recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and address a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection. More important than ever, the goals provide a critical framework for COVID-19 recovery.



Annex 2

A moment for reinvigorating multilateralism

The UN's 75th anniversary in 2020 arrived at a time of great upheaval and peril. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Member States came together to recognize that our challenges are interconnected and can only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism with the United Nations at the centre of our efforts.

They pledged to strengthen global governance for the sake of present and coming generations and, to that end, requested the Secretary-General to report back with recommendations to advance our common agenda and to respond to current and future challenges.

If the world is to recover from COVID-19 and we are to deliver on our promises to future generations - to secure a world where everyone can thrive in peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet – then 2021 must be the year we change gear.



Member States identified 12 areas of action that can only be addressed through reinvigorated multilateralism.



We must think big. We need to reshape the foundations and reaffirm the core values that underpin collective action.

Time is of essence and the choices before us are stark. Our welfare, and indeed the permanence of human life, now depend on us working effectively together across borders and sectors to manage many shared risks and achieve a vital set of common goals, including but not limited to, those set out in the UN75 Declaration.