



## UNITED NATIONS PRESS RELEASE

### **Experts Meet to Improve Coordination and Access to Global Geospatial Information for Solving Development Challenges**

Representatives from 90 United Nations Member States and more than 50 international and civil society organizations and private sector entities will gather in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 23 to 27 October for a series of high-profile meetings to improve the global management and coordination of geospatial information and in the application of geospatial technology to solve global socio-economic challenges.

The use of geospatial information (location-based information) goes beyond national borders. Many natural disasters and pandemic diseases are cross-border in their impact and tackling them requires information located and displayed globally. There is a need therefore for common frameworks and standards for national data to be used regionally and internationally and to harmonize definitions and methods that will enhance the use, accessibility and application of geospatial information globally.

“Over the last decade, new technologies have deeply transformed the availability and accessibility of geospatial information and its potential uses,” said Mr. Sha Zukang, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs and Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). “After recent earthquakes in several countries, there was great demand for quick and comprehensive geospatial information, from all sources. There is still much fragmentation in national institutional arrangements, as geospatial information entities are often scattered across ministries. The same could also be said for the UN. Thus there is a great need for a thorough discussion on the geospatial policies and institutional arrangements,” he said.

The power of pooling high-resolution satellite imagery, geospatial information, and particularly census and statistical information for decision making and policy formulation has now been fully recognized; while accessibility to such information is seen as an important development tool. Traditional maps have long been the primary tool for users to view and access geospatial information. In the past decades, rapid advances in geospatial information technology are enabling better access and integration of location-based information and transforming the traditional role of maps to include new tools for analysis and management.

Some 350 participants in Seoul will aim to bring countries together to share their experiences in how they organize their geospatial information infrastructure; what are their policy priorities; and how do they deal with crowd-sourced information versus those produced by national authorities.

On 23 October, the Korean National Geographic Information Institute and the Statistics Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs will host a policy and technology dialogue between industry leaders and government officials on the geospatial technology and global challenges. The dialogue will lead into the High-Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management, from 24 to 26 October, organized by the UN Statistics Division, the Cartographic Section of the UN

Department of Field Support and Korea's National Geographic Information Institute. On 26 October, the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management -- the official UN consultative mechanism on GGIM -- will convene its first meeting to discuss, among other procedural matters, its contribution to Rio+20. On the final day, Statistics Korea, the United States Census Bureau, Eurostat and the UN Statistics Division will organize a seminar on the integration of statistical and geospatial information.

The UN Programme on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM) plays a leading role in setting the agenda for the development of global geospatial information and the promotion of its use to address key global challenges.

GGIM provides a forum to liaise and coordinate among UN Member States, and between UN Member States and international organizations and serves as the apex entity of the global geospatial information community. In 2011, to improve the management and coordination of geospatial information at the global level, the UN established the Committee of Experts on GGIM that will bring together decision-makers and specialists from all Member States as well as international professional organizations to propose work-plans and guidelines with a view to promoting common principles, policies, methods, mechanisms and standards for the interoperability and inter-changeability of geospatial data and services.

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