

Beijing Declaration

Sustainable Development with Geospatial Information

We, the participants of the Third High Level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management held in Beijing, China, from 22 to 24 October 2014, having met in the context of United Nations initiatives to enhance cooperation in geospatial information management to support global sustainable development challenges, hereby issue this Beijing Declaration on Sustainable Development with Geospatial Information.

Recalling Resolution 2011/24 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, which recognized the need to promote international cooperation in the field of global geospatial information management;

Recalling the Doha Declaration on Advancing Global Geospatial Information Management of 6 February 2013, which called for a greater use of geospatial information for timely, evidence-based and authoritative decision-making and policy formulation on location-based development issues, including disasters and humanitarian needs;

Recalling further the fourth session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) in which the Committee, noting that the level of understanding and use of geography and geospatial information in sustainable development, particularly at the policy and decision-making levels, still remains limited, urged Member States to develop more effective communication mechanisms to demonstrate how geospatial information can contribute to sustainable development;

Recognizing that the Rio+20 outcome document placed particular emphasis on the importance and value of reliable and authoritative geospatial information for sustainable development, humanitarian assistance, and disaster risk reduction, including in the areas of policymaking, programming and project operations;

Recognizing further that the Prototype Global Sustainable Development Report, released at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on 1 July 2014, calls for better integration of science and technology in sustainable development, and for increased visibility and availability of evidence-based science to decision-makers;

Acknowledging that the Open Working Group's outcome document, adopted by the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 10 September 2014, emphasizes that, in order to monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it will be important to improve the availability of and access to geographic data and statistics, and that there is a need to take urgent steps to improve the quality, coverage and availability of disaggregated data to ensure that no one is left behind;

Noting the conclusions of the Chengdu Forum on UN-GGIM on 17 October 2013, in which global geospatial information experts considered their contribution to the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, particularly in the areas of disaster risk reduction and mitigation, sustainable development, and the global trend towards urbanization;

Noting further China's donation of the GlobeLand30 land cover datasets to the United Nations to assist in scientific decision-making, and help measure and monitor critical environmental components of the SDGs and post-2015 development agenda;

Agreeing that geospatial information and products, now more important than ever for providing the content and context for understanding natural and human systems, must contribute more to measure, monitor and manage sustainable development in a consistent way over time and for evidence-based decision and policy making;

Agreeing further that there is an urgent need for sustainable actions that address global humanitarian, environmental and economic challenges with innovative, affordable and fit-for-purpose solutions that are based on knowledgeable choices derived from current, comprehensive and credible information and data that are geospatially enabled;

We therefore resolve to,

- be that responsible geospatial information community, together with key partners and stakeholders, providing collaborative leadership for the change needed towards the vision outlined in the Secretary-General's report 'Realizing the World We Want for All', a sustainable world free of want and fear;
- urgently deploy our collective competencies and capacities to advance the critical role of geospatial information in the ongoing debate on sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda, particularly with regard to measuring and monitoring SDG targets and indicators consistently over space and time, and in doing so invite all national geospatial experts to work closely with their governments leading up to September 2015 to demonstrate the vital role of geospatial information for sustainable development;
- develop practical means to transform geospatial information (data and themes), and its ability to define relationships and linkages across multiple variables and communities, into relevant targets and indicators that will contribute to the sustainable development agenda as a framework for measuring and monitoring their results;
- work collaboratively to increase and enhance the value, availability and sharing of evidence-based science to decision-makers by providing concrete examples of geospatial information, integrated with statistics, remote sensing and other big data, in the sustainable development agenda so that it is recognized as being indispensable to end users;
- commit ourselves to take deliberate measures to close the geospatial information technology gap, and associated implementation challenges, between developing and developed countries by establishing frameworks to build capacity through sharing of data, best practices, technical knowledge, tools and workflows in the collection, production, management and dissemination of geospatial information for those countries in need of such assistance;
- affirm the importance of good land administration and management to address the challenges for the post-2015 development agenda, specifically supporting the development of fit-for-purpose land administration and geospatial information approaches in developing countries;
- promote the greater use and application of geospatial information for managing climate change and disaster management, including the important linkages between terrestrial and ocean data, through the opportunity to provide inputs into the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction to be held in Sendai, Japan, 14-18 March 2015;
- improve the integration between geospatial information and statistics, at multiple scales, in order to provide better planning, monitoring and evaluation of sustainable development;
- encourage global, regional and national collaboration and capacity building in the promotion and development of geospatial information management for measuring and monitoring sustainable development, and in partnership with the contribution and ongoing role played by other inter-governmental organizations, international non-government organizations, academia and industry in supporting this important global process;
- support and leverage the global framework and collaboration mechanisms which are being established under the auspices of UN-GGIM, in order for countries to address and solve the common global challenges of sustainable urban planning and land management issues, mitigating and adapting to climate change and managing disaster risk by leveraging science, technology and innovation;
- overcome the challenges in implementing geospatial education and awareness, policy, standards and frameworks by engaging our professional community, industry and research related centers and institutes;
- leverage the new data and technology revolution, including consideration of the importance of the wisdom of the crowd, citizen engagement, open source, sensors, the dynamic nature of the data, semantics, the provider community and geospatial enabled solutions for planning, implementing and assessment. Engagement should continue with the important work of the community on placing authority into informal data sources.