



UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
STATISTICS DIVISION

**Hangzhou Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management
Hangzhou, China, 24-25 May 2012**

Opening Statement

Paul Cheung, Director
United Nations Statistics Division

Honourable Mr. Xu Deming, Vice Minister, Ministry of Land and Resources, Director General, National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China.

Honourable Dr. Xia Baolong, Governor, People's Government of Zhejiang Province of China.

Dr. Li Pengde, Deputy Director General, National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China, President of PCGIAP.

Dear Participants and Colleagues,

On behalf of the United Nations, I would like to welcome you to this Hangzhou Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management. I am delighted to see so many professionals gathered here, representing countries from the Asia-Pacific region as well as other regions, international organizations and the geospatial industry. I wish to place on record our appreciation to Mr. Xu Deming, Director General and Dr. Li Pengde, Deputy Director General of the National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China, and their staff for their hard work in organizing and hosting this Forum. At the same time, I wish to acknowledge the support of Dr. Xia Baolong, Governor of the Zhejiang Province and the Zhejiang Provincial Government for enabling us to meet here in Hangzhou (known as "Heaven on Earth") on the shores of the famous West Lake.

I would also like to thank the Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific and its President, Li Pengde from China, its Vice-President, Hiroshi Murakami from Japan, and its Secretary, Leem, Seong An from the Republic of Korea, for their efforts in promoting the work of PCGIAP and associated regional activities, including the Hangzhou Forum. In this regard, let me once again acknowledge the support that the PCGIAP secretariat is providing to the UN in organizing the forthcoming 19th UN Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific to be held in Bangkok, 29 October to 1 November 2012. The PCGIAP secretariat is also providing

valuable input into the upcoming second session of the UN Committee of Experts on GGIM, to be convened in New York, 13-15 August 2012.

Distinguished participants,

At the outset of this forum, allow me to say a few words about the intergovernmental mechanisms and consultations that are taking place with geospatial information management – from global, regional, and national perspectives – as they are significant.

Firstly, as you are aware, the UN has recently implemented an initiative on Global Geospatial Information Management, in response to the need expressed by many countries for a global coordination mechanism that would enable the global community to effectively manage and utilize the often unrealised potential of geospatial information and resources. This is similar to what PCGIAP is already doing for Asia and Pacific, but at the global scale.

In this context, in July 2011 the United Nations, through ECOSOC, established an intergovernmental body, the UN Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management, providing a forum for coordination and dialogue among the Member States, and between Member States and relevant international organizations on enhanced cooperation in the field of global geospatial information. At a time when few new intergovernmental bodies are being created, this decision reflected ECOSOC's commitment to the importance of managing geospatial information globally for sustainable development, disaster risk reduction, and humanitarian assistance.

The Committee of Experts convened its inaugural session in October last year in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in conjunction with the First High Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management. For the first time at any geospatial event, Ministers from eight countries attended and gave a strong endorsement for the importance of advancing a global framework for managing geospatial information. They stressed the

importance of spatially enabled government and society in the context of policy formulation and decision making, and the need for the ‘democratization of data’ to enhance development potential. The Committee discussed many substantive geospatial issues, some of which are now being progressed through a number of Working Group activities and will be discussed in this Forum.

The Seoul Declaration adopted at the High Level Forum gave strong political support to the GGIM initiative, as Member States realized that they must come together to address the issues of managing global geospatial information, particularly since they have the mandate and accountability to maintain and deliver the national geospatial information base, not the private sector. The Seoul Declaration urged the need to foster and strengthen national, regional, and global cooperation, so as to develop an interconnected global community of practice under the United Nations. It also stressed the need to devise effective processes for promoting common frameworks and standards, and harmonizing definitions and methods for the treatment of national geospatial data. The Declaration further called for the sharing of experiences in policy making, supporting legislation, funding strategies, and facilitation and promotion of capacity development among the developing countries.

Allow me to briefly touch on another global mechanism, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, or Rio +20, to be held in Rio de Janeiro from 20 to 22 June, in just 4 weeks from now. This event will see the world’s leaders gather to debate about and make decisions on how we can reduce poverty, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection on an increasingly crowded planet in order to determine the future we want. I am pleased to inform you that GGIM will have a presence there. The Secretariat has successfully secured a side event during the main Rio +20 conference period to demonstrate the importance of geospatial information and location in monitoring sustainable development. The side event will be led by the UK Government with support from the GGIM Secretariat and a number of other countries, including Brazil and Australia, and will take place on 20 June from 5:00 to 6:30pm in the main conference venue.

Let me now turn to regional mechanisms, with a focus on Asia and the Pacific. Since 1955, 18 Regional Cartographic Conferences have been convened every three years in the Asia-Pacific region. These Conferences constitute an important regional mechanism for the exchange of information among national mapping and surveying authorities and the international scientific organizations active in geospatial information. They offer a forum where governmental officials, planners, scientists and experts from all over the world can address common and critical issues affecting the work of national mapping and surveying organizations in this area.

As I mentioned earlier, the 19th Conference will take place in ESCAP facilities in Bangkok, Thailand, in October this year. A provisional agenda has been developed and a full and comprehensive program of discussions and decisions will take place. Outcomes and actions will be reported back to ECOSOC and GGIM. Therefore, the Regional Cartographic Conferences are an important part of the regional consultation mechanism, and they must continue and be further strengthened. In this regard, the same conclusion must be made for PCGIAP.

As many of you may know, PCGIAP, the Permanent Committee on Geographic Information System (GIS) Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific, was established pursuant to a resolution adopted during the 13th United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, held in 1994, in Beijing, China.

PCGIAP operates under the purview of the UN Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific (UNRCC-AP) and submits its reports and recommendations to that Conference. It also provides substantive and organizational support to the Conference, in terms of selection of topics to be discussed by the Conference and invitation of speakers. Since its creation, the UN Secretariat has forged strong ties with PCGIAP in the preparation and organization of the UNRCC-AP, and encouraged PCGIAP to cooperate with other regional organizations (e.g. PC-IDEA) and participate in other events (UNRCC-Americas, etc.). This close collaboration with PCGIAP reflects UN's recognition of the importance of geospatial information at

national and regional levels, and that regional initiatives are a vital foundation for the global agenda. This is an important consideration. PCGIAP not only represents 56 member countries, it also represents a region that contains 60% of the world's population; diverse geographies, cultures and populations; a broad mix of developed and developing nations with associated economic growth; from large continents to small island developing states; and many challenges as a consequence of natural disasters. Therefore, the many and various national motivations and perspectives in the geospatial information development cycle must be recognised and considered.

Thirdly, there are the national efforts to promote cooperation and coordination across countries. I have already mentioned the inaugural session on GGIM which was hosted in the Asia-Pacific region by the Republic of Korea last October. The NGII (National Geographic Information Institute) of Korea is extremely active and is doing very interesting work across the region in cooperation with KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency). Additionally, I was fortunate enough to be able to participate in the International Symposium on Spatially Enabled Government and Society, held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in February this year and organized by the Malaysian Department of Survey and Mapping. The symposium discussed institutional, legal and common frameworks, management models, and technical standards for the building of sustainable spatial data infrastructures. It was a very successful conference.

Distinguished participants,

This brings me to why we are here today. This Hangzhou Forum is another important national initiative but with an important global perspective. I understand that this Forum hopes to evolve into a global consultation platform to support the work of UNGGIM. It will discuss the priority issues on GGIM and provide input to the global decision-making mechanism. The forum recognizes that, in order to be successful in building a sustainable mechanism for global geospatial information management, we need more discussion and consultations on issues and implementation strategies around

the world. In this context, I must congratulate the National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China for their foresight in initiating this event.

The 2012 Hangzhou Forum will provide a platform for an exchange of views on key policy and technology issues and the need for improved regional cooperation in global geospatial information management. Particular attention during the meeting will be given to: institutional arrangements at national levels with an emphasis on how to promote greater coordination within government; evolving a new geodetic positioning framework; considerations of data accuracy and quality; new methods of data sharing and dissemination; the desirability of a Statement of Ethics for the global geospatial community; and emerging trends in geospatial information technology.

Before concluding, please allow me to say a few words of the key objectives for GGIM. It is clear that the GGIM initiative has now gained considerable momentum, and that countries hope that through GGIM, they can come together to build a professionally credible and transparent data platform as well as a regulatory framework to facilitate the effective management of the growing geospatial information resources around the world. In this regard, I believe that GGIM should continue to aim for the following four essential outcomes:

1. Evolving a shared vision for the future in the management of geospatial information nationally, regionally, and globally. The vision should pay special attention to the evolution in technology, in institutional arrangements, and in the role of national governments as the regulator within the context of a globally agreed regulatory framework. The GGIM Committee has already embarked on a visioning exercise with respect to the future trends in technology, and this will be discussed more in a dedicated session this morning.
2. Evolving an inclusive platform for improving, sharing and disseminating national and global geospatial data so that the data could be effectively used to address global challenges in a timely manner.

3. Evolving a globally agreed 'Statement of Ethics' and a supporting code of conduct to enhance public trust. The geospatial information community should face up to the challenges of providing guidelines on ethical behaviors for the profession. This is especially important as crowd sourcing becomes a source of geospatial information. This statement of ethics should help guide the behavior of all entities engaging in the production, management, and dissemination of geospatial information. This concept will also be further discussed at this forum.

4. Evolving a mutually beneficial relationship between the public sector and the private sector with clearly defined roles. There is no question that the private sector has a major role to play in the production and dissemination of geospatial information. Yet, they can't exist in a regulatory vacuum. The government must establish a clear, transparent and professionally sound regulatory framework so that both the public and the private sector can mutually reinforce each other in harnessing the power of geospatial information in national development.

I hope that countries around the world, the professional organizations, and the private sector will continue to support the work and vision of GGIM and bring them to reality. At the UN, we will do our best to develop GGIM together with all the member states.

Thank you.