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Opening remarks
Fifth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts
on Global Geospatial Information Management
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Conference Room 2 (CR 2)

Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates and Observers,

I am delighted to welcome you to the fifth session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM). Many of you have travelled far, to share your expertise in the spirit of global cooperation. I commend you all for your continued interest, energy and participation.

Although only in your fifth session, you have already achieved some major milestones and you are proceeding quickly with key global topics. You will complete the UN-GGIM regional committee architecture at this session. The creation of five regional UN-GGIM committees is to be applauded. Strong linkages between regional and global geospatial information processes and methods are indispensable.

You must also be congratulated for formulating the first geospatial resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in February this year. This landmark resolution recognizes the global importance of location and positioning for many areas of development.

I understand that you will also finalize several important guidelines to assist Member States in implementing and adopting international geospatial standards and best practice.

I also note that you will address a number of issues that are closely aligned to sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda such as the application of geospatial information to land administration and management. You have a full agenda over the next three days.

Distinguished Delegates and Observers,

2015 is a crucial year in global development, a year in which world leaders will steer the global course of action to improve people's lives and protect the planet. With key finance, sustainable development and climate change conferences being convened, the focus on practical

solutions and international cooperation will be imperative. This Committee of Experts, and geospatial information, has a valuable role to play.

The monitoring of the Millennium Development Goals over the past 15 years taught us that data are an indispensable element of the development agenda. Knowing where people and things are, and their relationship to each other, is essential for informed decision-making, and to measure and monitor outcomes.

The experience of the MDGs provides a springboard for our next steps. A bold new development agenda called “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” was agreed upon last Sunday and will be adopted at the UN Summit next month. It will include 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 associated targets and will guide the decisions we take over the next 15 years. Efforts to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data, disaggregated by geographic location, will be critical.

The Inter-agency and Expert Advisory Group on SDGs is currently preparing a global indicator framework under the guidance of the Statistical Commission. They will need to consider geospatial information in their work. I call upon this Committee of Experts to provide your technical expertise and support to this process.

Distinguished Delegates and Observers,

While the challenges before us are numerous, so are the opportunities to make a real difference to global development. This will be reflected in your deliberations when you discuss an initial draft of the comprehensive review of the Committee’s work and operations, to be submitted to ECOSOC in early 2016. I am confident that the Member States represented in ECOSOC will study your comprehensive review with interest and appreciation.

In closing, I am pleased to recognize and thank the co-Chairs of your Committee of Experts, all the Chairs and leaders of the regional committees and working and expert groups, the authors of technical reports and the Rapporteur, without whose essential contribution, a meeting of this size would not be possible. I thank you all for coming to New York to continue the important work of positioning geospatial information to address global challenges. I assure you that you have my Department’s full support.

I wish you all a productive, but also enjoyable session, and very much look forward to your deliberations and outcomes.

Thank you.
