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Opening remarks
Sixth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts
on Global Geospatial Information Management
New York, 3 August 2016, UNHQ, CR4

Dear Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates and Observers,

Welcome to the sixth session of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM). The presence of representatives from over 100 countries and organisations is a testament to the vibrant professional community that you have created over the past 5 years. I commend you all for your continued interest, energy and contribution to this essential topic.

2015 was a momentous year with four major international summits on Disaster Risk Reduction, Financing for Development, Sustainable Development and Climate Change. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an ambitious blueprint to guide how we collectively transform the social, economic and environmental dimensions of humanity and our planet over the next 15 years. Anchored by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 targets and a global indicator framework, the 2030 Agenda addresses the need for new data acquisition and integration approaches to improve the availability, quality, timeliness and disaggregation of data to support implementation at all levels. This includes exploiting the potential of a wide range of data, including Earth observations and geospatial information. As a consequence, this Committee of Experts has a valuable role to play.

In your deliberations you will address a number of substantive topics and issues that are closely aligned to the needs of the new sustainable development agenda. These include: a global geodetic reference frame; national institutional arrangements; land administration and management; geospatial information and services for disasters and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through geospatial information.

Distinguished Delegates and Observers,

The new data needs are unprecedented. They will require coordinated efforts at the global, regional and national levels. Efforts to increase the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data, disaggregated by a range of metrics, including geographic location, will be critical in order to track progress, make informed decisions and to ensure we leave no one behind.

The global SDG indicator framework was prepared by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) under the guidance of the Statistical Commission. The framework will need to consider the integration of geospatial information and statistical data for the production of a number of indicators. Therefore the Inter-Agency and Expert Group recently established a Working Group on Geospatial Information to provide expertise and advice as to how geospatial information, Earth observations and other new data sources can reliably and consistently contribute to the indicators. I call upon this Committee of Experts to provide your valuable technical expertise and support to this process.

Distinguished Delegates and Observers,

My opening remarks would not be complete without a note of congratulations on the adoption of the resolution on ‘Strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management’ by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) last week. This resolution, facilitated by Mexico, represents a milestone for the Committee of Experts. It acknowledges the considerable achievements and progress made over the past five years in the coordination and coherence of geospatial information management. This resolution does not only streamline the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Council in the field of geospatial information management, but it also strengthens and broadens the mandate of this Committee as the relevant body to report to the Council on all matters relating to geography, geospatial information and related topics. In short, this resolution recognizes the increasing role and relevance of the Committee.

In closing, I recognize and thank the co-Chairs of your Committee, all the Chairs and leaders of the regional committees and working and expert groups, the authors of technical reports and the Rapporteur. 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 not only have my Department’s full support, you also have the full support of ECOSOC.

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

Thank you.
