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Application of geospatial information related to land administration and management

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report of the Expert Group on Land Administration and Management for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its fifth session, held in New York from 5 to 7 August 2015, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 5/105, in which it acknowledged the importance and need for geospatial information as an essential base for an effective and efficient land information system, and the need for the Committee to play a leading role at the policy level by raising political awareness and highlighting the importance to decision makers of the need for timely and fit-for-purpose land administration and management. The Committee endorsed the establishment of an expert group to undertake the work needed to advance the activities related to land administration and management, and approved the convening of the fourth High-level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management, to be held in Addis Ababa in April 2016, in order to strengthen the use of geospatial information for good land governance. The Committee also requested that the expert group undertake work that is able to contribute to the sustainable development indicator process and areas, as appropriate, and that an action plan, informed by broad global consultation and the outcomes of the High-level Forum, be prepared by the expert group to address the main areas of focus. In its report, the Expert Group on Land Administration and Management describes its establishment, delineates its terms of reference and initial two-year action plan and details the deliberations and significant decisions emanating from the conference on land and poverty of the World Bank, held in Washington, D.C., in March 2016, and the first meeting of the expert group held on the margins of the fourth High-level Forum, as well as those leading up to the Addis Ababa declaration on geospatial information management towards good land governance for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which was adopted at the conclusion of the fourth High-level Forum.

* E/C.20/2016/1.

I. Introduction

1. At its fifth session, held in August 2015, the Committee of Experts welcomed the report (E/C.20/2015/9) and detailed discussion paper, “The Application of Geospatial Information – Land Administration and Management” on the importance of geospatial information to land administration and management, and expressed its appreciation to the international organizations, agencies and Member States for their considered expert contributions to the documents.

2. Further to its deliberations, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 5/105 acknowledging the importance and need for geospatial information as an essential base for an effective and efficient land information system to support the administration of land policy frameworks, customary rights, security of tenure, property rights, sustainable development and overall environmental, economic and social well-being. The Committee also noted the need to play a leading role at the policy level by raising political awareness and highlighting the importance to decision makers of the need for timely and fit for purpose land administration and management, and supported by capacity development, particularly in developing countries and vulnerable regions. The decision also endorsed the establishment of the Expert Group on Land Administration and Management, with the mandate to undertake the work needed to advance the activities related to land administration and management, in addition to contributing to the sustainable development indicator process as appropriate. Additionally, the Committee of Experts recommended that the Expert Group in pursuance of its mandate collaborate with other professional bodies and experts working in the field.

3. In making decision 5/105, the Committee of Experts approved and supported the convening of the fourth High-Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management, in Addis Ababa in April 2016, with the overarching theme ‘Good Land Governance for the 2030 Agenda’. In addition, the Committee noted that the Forum should have a particular emphasis on sharing experiences, including benefits and challenges, considering “fit-for-purpose” aspects, digital land registers, cadastres, and other land data needs.

4. The Committee of Experts requested the preparation of an action plan, informed by broad global consultation with Member States and the outcomes of the High-Level Forum, to address the main areas of focus identified in the discussion paper and ensuring that there was no overlap or duplication with other initiatives, including regional initiatives, and requested the Expert Group to report to the Committee at its next session on its progress.

5. This report presents the work accomplished by the Expert Group, covering its establishment, an overview of its terms of reference and initial two-year action plan. It also discusses its activities at the annual World Bank Land and Poverty Conference, the High-Level Forum itself, and the Forum’s adoption of the Addis Ababa Declaration on geospatial information management towards good land governance for the 2030 Agenda. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the report and express its views on the two-year action plan. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 18.

II. Establishment of the Expert Group

6. Good land administration, considering both formal and informal rights of the use and ownership of land, is a basic requirement for social and economic development. Land administration is essentially concerned with people-to-land relationship and is thus place-based and people-centric. This people-to-land relationship has a fundamental role in achieving sustainable development. Based on discussions of the fourth session in August 2014 the Committee of Experts in recognition of its role and global status endorsed the recommendation from Member States to add the application of geospatial information related land administration and management and in support of sustainable development, to its substantive programme of work (E/2014/46-E/C.20/2014/15).

7. The Expert Group on Land Administration and Management was established in September 2015 subsequent to the mandate given by the Committee at its fifth session in August. The Committee requested that the Expert Group: undertake the work needed to advance the activities related to land administration and management; to strengthen the use of geospatial information for good land governance; to collaborate with other professional bodies, and experts working in the field, including UN entities and other international organisations; and to undertake work that is able to contribute to the global indicator framework process and areas as appropriate including, land degradation, rapid urbanisation, climate change, access to land, property rights and ownership. This was seen as being particularly relevant, having noted that people-to-land relationships are reflected in several of the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. Co-Chaired by the Netherlands and Lesotho, the Expert Group presently consists of 17 Member States (Belgium, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Finland, Guyana, Lesotho, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, the United Kingdom) and three organisations (Global Spatial Data Infrastructure (GSDI) Association, the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC), and ESRI). It should be noted that the 17 Member States represent all five UN-GGIM regional bodies.

III. Terms of Reference

9. The Expert Group's draft Terms of Reference were prepared and circulated to the Group for inputs and comments, and were then presented to the Bureau of the Committee of Experts for review and consideration at its meeting in New York in December 2015. The Bureau reviewed and submitted comments which were subsequently incorporated in the final Terms of Reference (Annex 1).

10. The Expert Group's Terms of Reference detail the Group's objectives, functions, specific activities, membership requirements, composition and terms of office, reporting procedure, frequency of meetings, and responsibilities of the Secretariat. As defined in the Terms of Reference, the major functions of the Expert Group are to:

- a. Provide a forum for coordination and dialogue among global experts from the land administration and geospatial communities with a view to advance the activities related to the administration and management, and strengthening the use of geospatial information for good land governance;

- b. Propose work plans informed by broad consultation to address the main areas of focus identified by Member States while ensuring that there are no overlaps or duplication with other initiatives;
- c. Address governance, data management, institutional and technology adoption and sustainability issues related to the implementation and management of efficient and effective land administration and management systems; and
- d. Contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and other areas as appropriate including, access to land, property rights, ownership, land degradation, rapid urbanization, and climate change, in coordination with other expert entities;

IV. Activities of the Expert Group

11. The Expert Group's activities during the intersessional period focused on solidifying its membership base and areas of possible contribution; identifying, liaising with and strengthening partner relations; informing and promoting the existence of the Expert Group, its mandate and the importance of good land governance; and defining and preparing its two-year action plan.

Membership and Partner Contributions

12. At the first meeting of the Expert Group held on the margins of the Fourth High Level Forum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in April 2016, there were additional participation and contributions from Australia, Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Ireland, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, the World Bank Group and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

13. The Expert Group continues to encourage Member States to join the Expert Group in the interest to ensure broad and equitable geographic representations.

Promotion and Advocacy

14. The Expert Group continues to foster collaboration within the land management and geospatial communities, and to raise political awareness for policy makers of pertinent land governance and management issues, through presentations and participating in related events including the annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty, the Fourth High-level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management, and the 2016 Working Week of the International Federation of Surveyors. An overview of these collaborations are as follows:

- a. The 17th Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty with the theme 'Scaling up Responsible Land Governance' was held between 14-18 March 2016, at the World Bank Headquarters in Washington DC.
 - (i) The Expert Group informed the Conference of their establishment and its co-Chair delivered a paper entitled: "*UN-GGIM launches a group of experts on land administration and management*".
 - (ii) The Expert Group, in collaboration with the World Bank, organised a session entitled 'Consultation on UN-GGIM Expert Group on Land

Administration and Management’ which was chaired by a previous Co-Chair of the Committee of Experts with keynote presentations and panel discussions that involved a distinguished group of global land professionals.

- b. The Fourth High-Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management with the theme ‘Good Land Governance for the 2030 Agenda’ was held between 20-22 April 2016 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
 - (i) The first Expert Group meeting was convened on 19th April, 2016, on the margins of the High-Level Forum, with 41 participants representing 18 Member States and regional bodies of the United Nations. The then draft of the Expert Group’s terms of reference was deliberated. Issues, actions and strategies identified and discussed at the meeting were used to inform the preparation of the action plan. The areas considered included standards, inclusiveness and participatory approaches, overview of existing initiatives to avoid duplication, need for political awareness, creation of an atlas of land tenure, partnerships, the need for showcases and capacity building. The notes of the meeting are available on the Expert Group’s web page.
 - (ii) The High-Level Forum reinforced the importance of geospatial information in good land governance, the appropriateness of “fit for purpose land administration and management” and the need for collaboration with all stakeholders to address land issues and challenges for sustainable development. The Forum culminated with the issuance of the Addis Ababa Declaration on Geospatial Information Management Towards Good Land Governance for the 2030 Agenda.
- c. The 2016 Working Week of the International Federation of Surveyors was held between 3 – 6 May, 2016 in Christchurch, New Zealand.
 - (i) The Expert Group continued its awareness and advocacy campaign and its co-Chair delivered a paper, entitled: “*The agenda for a Group of Experts on Land Administration and Management within the United Nations*”.
 - (ii) A notable outcome from this event was the expression of continuing support from the membership of FIG and participants at the Working Week for the activities of the Expert Group.

V. Action Plan

- 15. The Expert Group reviewed its inventory of issues, actions and strategies after its meeting in Addis Ababa and prepared its draft two-year action plan (August 2016 – August 2018) that was subsequently discussed and agreed by the Group.
- 16. The action plan is based on the following:
 - a. To achieve the goals as defined in the Group’s Terms of Reference;
 - b. To follow-up on the Addis Ababa Declaration on Geospatial Information Management Towards Good Land Governance for the 2030 Agenda; and

- c. To encourage the participation of Member States and professional organisations, in order to achieve broad and equitable geographic representation.
17. The action plan focus primarily on the following areas:
 - a. Connect 'Fit for Purpose' land administration and management to the sustainable development goals;
 - b. Advocate for and create political awareness at local, national and global levels on the need and benefits of effective and efficient land administration and management;
 - c. Promote global access to geospatially referenced land administration data, standards and frameworks;
 - d. Review and consider existing initiatives, gather and promote good practices;
 - e. Promote inclusiveness, participatory approaches and involve a wide spectrum of stakeholders in land administration and management; and
 - f. Encourage partnerships; enhance education and capacity building.

The action plan and supporting details are available on the Expert Group's web page.

VI. Points for discussion

18. The Committee is invited to:

(a) Take note of the report and the work carried out by the Expert Group and express its views on the way forward in addressing land administration and management issues and challenges, in particular within the context of the 2030 Agenda;

(b) Express its views on the Terms of Reference with a view to its endorsement;

(c) Express its views and provide guidance on the planned activities of the Expert Group and to encourage wider involvement and participation from Member States in the Group's activities.

ANNEX 1

The United Nations Expert Group on Land Administration and Management (UN-EG-LAM)

Terms of Reference

1. Mandate

- 1.1. The establishment of the *United Nations Expert Group on Land Administration and Management* was endorsed by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) at its Fifth Session in August 2015.

2. Objectives

The major objectives of the Expert Group are to:

- 2.1. Play a leading role at the policy level by raising political awareness and highlighting the importance to decision makers of the need for timely and fit for purpose land administration and management; and
- 2.2. Encourage the use of geospatial information, tools and systems to improve the legal certainty of all citizens in the world with respect to the registration of the relation between people and land.

3. Functions

3.1. The functions of the Expert Group of will be to:

- (a) Provide a forum for coordination and dialogue among global experts from the land administration and geospatial communities with a view to advance the activities related to the administration and management, and strengthening the use of geospatial information for good land governance;
- (b) Propose work plans, informed by broad global consultation, to address the main areas of focus identified by Member States while ensuring that there are no overlaps or duplication with other initiatives;
- (c) Address governance, data management, institutional and technology adoption and sustainability issues related to the implementation and management of efficient and effective land administration and management systems, and transparent, functioning land markets and;
- (d) Undertake work that is able to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals and other areas as appropriate including, access to land, property rights, ownership, land degradation, rapid urbanization, and climate change, in coordination with other expert entities.

4. Specific Activities

- 4.1. To achieve these objectives, the Expert Group's programme of work will focus on the following:
 - (a) Support the convening of the fourth UN-GGIM High-Level Forum to be held in April 2016, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focused on land administration and management, and with particular emphasis on sharing experiences, including benefits and challenges, considering fit for purpose aspects, digital land registers, cadastres, and other land data needs, in addition to demonstrating practical examples of land administration success stories;
 - (b) Increase advocacy and raise political awareness for policy makers of pertinent land governance and management issues;
 - (c) Undertake activities that foster collaboration within the land management/governance and geospatial communities within the United Nations, and at national and international levels, including identification and addressing common issues of land management and governance in support of sustainable development;
 - (d) Take the leadership role in addressing land administration issues with the focus on education, training and awareness, in addition to developing institutional capacity to implement the appropriate methodologies;
 - (e) Demonstrate the 'fit for purpose' approach by defining methodologies for different scenarios;
 - (f) Document, share and promote a variety of experiences/case studies showing the application of geospatial information to land administration;
 - (g) Examine existing land management tools and models, and encourage use and access to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experiences in their application;
 - (h) Explore the use of crowd sourcing and neighbourhood mapping to assist in assessments; and
 - (i) Emphasize the use and importance of a national cadastral map and geodetic framework as key contributors to land administration and a national spatial data infrastructure which supports other sectors – health, planning, infrastructure management, security and disaster management etc.
- 4.2. The Expert Group will bring to the attention of the Committee of Experts and the United Nations Statistics Division new developments relating to the application of geospatial and land information, as well as other developments coming from the Group's programme of work.
- 4.3. The Expert Group will stimulate and facilitate the cooperation between governmental organizations, NGO's, private sector parties and scientific bodies in order to achieve its objectives.

5. Membership, Composition and Terms of Office

- 5.1. The Expert Group will comprise high-level experts from Member States and international organizations from both the land management and geospatial communities. In appointing their national representatives, Member States will seek to designate experts with specific knowledge drawn from the fields of land management/governance and geospatial information. Where only one representative is appointed, Member States will encourage collaboration between representatives at the national level. Composition of the Expert Group should reflect equitable regional representation.
- 5.2. The Expert Group will elect two co-Chairs, one from a developing and the other from a developed country. Each will serve for a 3-year period, renewable once for an additional 3 years.
- 5.3. If considered appropriate, the Expert Group will establish sub-groups to work on particular aspects of the programme under its oversight.
- 5.4. The Expert Group will liaise as required with other international bodies and non-government organizations that may have an interest in the application of geospatial information to support land administration and management, including: the Global Land Tool Network (GLTN) as facilitated by UN-Habitat; the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); the Land Tenure and Management Unit, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; the Working Party on Land Administration (WPLA) of the Committee on Housing and Land Management, UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE); the Africa Land Policy Initiative, UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); the World Bank; the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) and other members of the Joint Board of Geospatial Information Societies (JB-GIS).
- 5.5. The Expert Group will review, and if appropriate, revise its terms of reference every three years, and in conjunction with a change in co-Chairs.

6. Reporting Procedure

- 6.1. The Expert Group will report to the Committee of Experts.

7. Frequency of Meetings

- 7.1. The Expert Group will normally operate virtually and try to meet in concurrence with related global geospatial meetings.
- 7.2. The UN-GGIM website, Skype, WebEx and DropBox, in addition to other relevant telecommunication tools will be used by the Expert Group for communication, collaboration, knowledge management and information sharing and dissemination.

8. Secretariat

- 8.1. The Global Geospatial Information Management Secretariat, Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs will serve as the

permanent secretariat of the Expert Group. It will provide the day-to-day management and coordination, host and maintain the Expert Group webpage and undertake all internal and external communication on behalf of the Group. In cooperation with the co-Chairs, the Secretariat will coordinate, monitor and report on the activities of any sub-groups, coordinate and prepare the agenda for meetings of the Expert Group, and issue notices from the Group and any other support activities deemed necessary.