



UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

**OPENING ADDRESS
BY
MR. SHA ZUKANG
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE 2012 UN CONFERENCE
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

High Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management

Seoul/Korea, 24 October 2011

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

Let me start by extending a warm welcome to all of you.

It is my pleasure to be here on this historic occasion of the First High-Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management, or GGIM.

At the outset of this event, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Republic of Korea for hosting this first High-Level Forum, in partnership with the United Nations.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to take on this ambitious, new agenda.

The area of GGIM is, indeed, brand new for the United Nations family.

Only a few months ago, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) decided to create a UN Committee of Experts... a global intergovernmental body that addresses geospatial information management.

It comes at a time when few new bodies are being created.

This bold decision reflects the Council's conviction that promoting greater and wider use of geospatial information globally is part of a new frontier in human progress.

GGIM will help us to take on today's big challenges such as sustainable development and humanitarian assistance.

Over the last decade, new technologies have deeply transformed the availability, and accessibility, of geospatial information, and its potential uses.

This is true both in the private sphere, as well as at the policy level.

The public at large has been quick to discover, and use, the new possibilities of geospatial information.

As its dissemination via the internet increased exponentially, so has its many applications.

As we know, there are many benefits to greater technical capabilities.

One of these benefits is more effective cooperation... which is also a responsibility.

ECOSOC explicitly mandated the new UN GGIM Committee to, and I quote:

“compile and disseminate best practices and experiences on geospatial information from national, regional and international bodies.” Unquote.

And we will need to do this, bearing in mind the different levels of development among countries as well as their specific national circumstances.

Therefore, I invite you, as experts from many different countries, to work together to this end.

Under the umbrella of the United Nations, you can share your experiences... develop common solutions... and create strategies that lead to stronger national capacities.

Excellencies,

This Forum is indeed a great start to the process of enhancing the cooperation and coordination of the Geospatial Information community. I understand that on the agenda of the Forum, you will discuss issues on international coordination and cooperation, to meet global challenges. This is an extremely important topic.

After recent earthquakes in several countries, there was great demand for quick and comprehensive geospatial information, from all sources. I hope this community can work effectively to provide the best possible geospatial information to meet the needs of future humanitarian crises.

In reviewing national practices, it has been brought to my attention that there is still much fragmentation in national institutional arrangements, as geospatial information entities are often scattered across ministries. The same could also be said for the UN. Thus there is a great need for a thorough discussion on the geospatial policies and institutional arrangements. I am pleased that this Forum has taken up this important topic. We will listen closely to the discussion and will facilitate the deliberation on national best practices.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, also known as Rio+20, will take place in June of next year.

As its Secretary-General, I encourage you to reflect on how your professional community can contribute to the preparations and the follow-up for this important event.

It is experts like you who can help make sustainable development a reality.

I understand this issue is on the agenda for the UN Committee's inaugural meeting.

I would like to assure you that the UN Secretariat will support this important new process to the best of our abilities.

But the process will not bear fruit if the Member States do not offer their fullest support.

Therefore, I encourage you to be fully involved in all deliberations.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Managing the resources on this planet, responsibly, is vital.

With a solid geospatial information base at the local, national, regional and global level, we can do this more effectively and efficiently.

Let's make GGIM an important global institution for the future.

I wish you a productive meeting over the next three days.

I wish you interesting and lively exchanges.

And I hope you strengthen the ties among members of this community.

Thank you.
