

Seminar on Regional Cooperation in Geospatial Information Management

Doha, Qatar, 7 February 2013

Overview

Since 1948, the United Nations has been promoting better understanding of cartography, geographical names and geospatial information among the Member States through international cooperation as well as conferences, publications, training courses and technical projects. The United Nations has been particularly organizing the regional cartographic conferences for Asia and the Pacific (convened every three years; 19 conferences since 1955), for the Americas (convened every four years; nine conferences since 1976), and for Africa (nine regional cartographic conferences were hosted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa, from 1963 until the 1990s). These regional conferences constitute an important regional mechanism for the exchange of information among national geospatial information authorities and the international scientific organizations active in geospatial information, and for addressing common and critical issues affecting the work in this area.

In this context, the UN-GGIM-AP (the former Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific), the Permanent Committee for Geospatial Data Infrastructure of the Americas (both of them formed in pursuance of UN resolutions), CODIST-Geo of UNECA in Africa, and the newborn UN-GGIM Europe are intergovernmental bodies established to coordinate geospatial information activities in the countries of their respective regions¹. However, a gap in the management of geospatial information at a regional level has been identified in the ESCWA region, and countries have expressed the need to establish a similar regional committee on geospatial information. Indeed, such a regional mechanism, under the auspices of UNESCWA, could help raise the awareness to politicians and decision makers of the scope and significance of geospatial information and its critical importance for sustainable socio-economic development. The aim of the regional committee is ultimately to promote the increased use of geospatial information and to influence the development of the geospatial information field in the ESCWA region.

Purpose

A seminar on regional coordination in geospatial information management is planned to take place in Doha, on 7 February 2013, on the margins of the Second High-level Forum on GGIM (4-6 Feb. 2013). It aims to discuss the following topics: (i) The state of geospatial information at a national level in the countries of the region (i.e. National spatial data infrastructure-NSDI); (ii) Overview on the international/regional cooperation and United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) initiative; and (iii) Coordination of geospatial information in the ESCWA region (the set up of a regional committee on Geospatial Information).

¹ One of the emerging geospatial information projects at regional level these permanent committees are in charge of is the establishment of a geodetic reference frame (SIRGAS for the Americas, APREF for Asia and the Pacific, AFREF for Africa and EUREF for Europe), in order to create a basis for national and regional three-dimensional reference networks, consistent with the International Terrestrial Reference Frame.

Programme of the Seminar

Opening Remarks

- UN Statistics Division (UNSD)
- ESCWA Representative

Session 1: International/Regional Coordination in Geospatial Information

- Co-Chair of UN-GGIM Overview on GGIM
- The Asia-Pacific region mode of operation
- European Cooperation
- Example of international cooperation: SALB project
 - o UNSD: general overview
 - o UNCS: technical matters

Session 2: National situation

- Presentation by several countries on their national activities in geospatial information

Session 3: Regional Cooperation (in ESCWA region)

- Open Panel Discussion:
 - o What are the key issues and challenges in geospatial information for the region?
 - o What regional cooperation mechanisms currently exist?
 - o What is the way forward for regional cooperation?
- Launch of a Regional Mechanism
- Concluding Remarks