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FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT**

OPENING ADDRESS

Third High-Level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management

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Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

On behalf of the United Nations, I join the People's Republic of China in welcoming all of you to the Third High-Level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of China for hosting this High-Level Forum, in partnership with the United Nations. In particular, I would like to pay tribute to our generous hosts, the National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China (NASG). Thank you for giving us the opportunity to take up this ambitious, important global agenda and for bringing the discussion to this dynamic and progressive region.

This High-Level Forum is most timely, and carries with it some level of urgency. The UN system and Member States are charting a path forward towards the post-2015 development agenda, including setting new Sustainable Development Goals. This week provides an opportunity for you, the global geospatial information community, to focus on the critical roles of geospatial information science in integrating the 3 pillars – economic, social and environmental – of sustainable development.

Your consideration of 'Sustainable Development with Geospatial Information' can build on the dialogues and ongoing initiatives of United Nations programmes convened in recent months. In this regard, I would like to briefly touch on some of these.

First, the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held its second session in New York this past July. At that time my Department released the Prototype Global Sustainable Development Report, as requested by Governments at Rio+20 in 2012. The Prototype Report calls for better integration of science and technology in sustainable development. It calls for exploring the potential of new approaches such as Big Data and remote sensing technologies. The prototype report also recognizes the need to increase the visibility and availability of evidence-based science to decision-makers.

Second, the Third International Conference on Small Island Development States was convened in Apia, Samoa last month. The SAMOA (SIDS Accelerated Modalities Of Action) Pathway Outcome Document supports the efforts of Small Island Developing States to strengthen the availability and accessibility of their data and statistical systems, and enhance their management of complex data systems, including geospatial data platforms.

Third, the UN General Assembly has just decided that the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development, which contains a set of 17 preliminary Sustainable Development Goals, will be the main basis for integrating the SDG's into the future development agenda. The preamble of the Outcome Document notes that, in order to monitor the implementation of the SDGs, it will be important to improve the availability of and access to geographic data and statistics.

Therefore, I am pleased to see a number of key and globally important 'geospatial' components of the Open Working Group's Outcome Document on the agenda of this Forum.

In your deliberations you will discuss key topics that include: the role of geospatial information for the post-2015 development agenda; sustainable cities and human settlements; mitigating and managing climate change and disasters; science, technology, and innovation to measure and monitor progress; and working together across borders and regions.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Chinese Government for its generous donation of the 30-meter Global Land Cover Datasets (GlobeLand30) to the United Nations. Recognising the importance of land cover data as an effective tool for measuring and assessing sustainable development, these detailed datasets will be freely available to Member States and the international community. They will assist in scientific decision-making, and help measure and monitor critical environmental components of the SDGs and post-2015 development agenda.

In closing, I am pleased to see the global diversity of expertise at this Forum, and that representatives of Member States are not coming alone. I particularly welcome our international partners and the private sector. This High-Level Forum offers a unique platform for free flowing, open and inclusive dialogue. The UN-GGIM helps to shape national systems, influences common practices, and brings our professionals from the public and private sectors together to harness the power of geospatial information. I invite you, as experts from many different countries, to work together to this end.

I wish you a productive meeting over the next three days and very much look forward to your guidance as to how geospatial information may contribute more holistically to sustainable development.

Thank you.
