

**Statement during the Opening Ceremony of the Third High Level Forum on
Sustainable Development with Geospatial Information
by Eduardo Sojo Garza Aldape, President of INEGI and co-Chair of UN-GGIM**

With the permission of the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and General Director of NASG.

Members of the global geospatial information community.

On behalf of the co-chairs of UN-GGIM let me first thank the Government of the Republic of China and specially NASG, for their support and generosity to have this important event in Beijing. I also want to thank the Under-Secretary-General of the UN for his support to UN-GGIM.

John Maynard Keynes, an outstanding economist from the XX century, said once, that people tend to underestimate the power of ideas, your presence here shows that you think differently, that you believe in the power of ideas to change reality, that you believe in the power of ideas to coordinate the future of UN-GGIM. I have no doubt that your thinking is correct.

Other people have said that there are ideas that change the world. UN-GGIM could be one of them. That is what makes this meeting so important.

This is the third UN-GGIM High Level Forum, whereby producers and users of geospatial information gather together to exchange views and experiences, to identify challenges and opportunities, to review best practices, and most importantly to learn from each other, as the General Director of NASG mentioned yesterday at a welcome dinner.

It has been just three years since the formation of UN-GGIM, just three years, and in such a short period of time, we have had four global meetings, three high-level forums and more than a dozen working group meetings. Countries' responses have been outstanding: only in August of this year, more than 280 representatives from 87 countries, 17 International organizations, 11 UN bodies and 31 private sector and non-government entities participated in the Fourth Session of the UN-GGIM in New York.

It is worth noting that, in these meetings, it has been made clear that it is governments, who have the mandate and the responsibility to establish policies that maintain and manage the geospatial information base of a country. It is governments who have to take the leadership. They cannot delegate that responsibility.

It has also been clear that we all have to work under a common platform and that to achieve this goal we need to strengthen the geospatial information community within the United Nations and this should be reflected in the report we will submit to ECOSOC in 2016.

When UN-GGIM met in New York in August this year, the agenda and agreements reached reflects both, the desire to work together and the conviction of being ambitious in our goals.

In New York we agreed to put forward to the UN General Assembly the adoption of a global geodetic reference frame and finalize the Statement of Shared Principles for Geospatial Information Management in order to be sent to the Economic and Social Council. We also agreed on the importance of standards in geospatial information management to assist Member States.

In New York, we acknowledged that harmonising national statistical and geospatial systems provides valuable means for integrating diverse data themes, as well as for the development of a global map.

There and other initiatives that we have taken reflect that our Community is active, is interested and is relevant.

It is with this spirit that we come to Beijing for this meeting. It is based upon these agreements and areas of interest, that we are here in China, to better understand countries' experiences, priorities and needs with regard to geospatial information and the potential uses of geospatial information in the Post-2015 development agenda.

We are also here to listen to the regional perspectives and to debate about sustainable cities and human settlements, climate change and disaster mitigation, and the work we do across borders and regions.

In our world today there is a very interesting and important debate on the use of technology and data revolution to monitor progress. We will address those issues too.

For all these reasons we will believe we have in front of us, a very interesting three days.

Let me conclude with a quote from the great geographer Peter Gould:

“All things... exist in space and time, so everything has not simply a history of how it came to be, but always a geography of where it is...”

UN-GGIM has three years of history and we are here in Beijing, thanks to the support of the government of China.

Welcome everyone and please enjoy the meeting.