Concept Note

Global Forum on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information

Conference Room 2, United Nations Headquarters, New York

4-5 August 2014

Background

The geospatial and statistical professional communities are major contributors of information used as evidence in decision-making processes across many sectors, both public and private. With the increasing complexity of national and global challenges and issues, the need to understand the interrelationships across the economic, social and environmental pillars is becoming critical. In today's global community, there is a clear recognition of the need to and value of linking geospatial information (which includes much environmental information) and statistical information (which includes much socioeconomic information) to improve the relevance of the evidence on which decisions will be made. The challenge being faced is how best to achieve this integration in an effective and consistent way.

The United Nations Statistical Commission (Statistical Commission) and the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) recognize the need to meet the challenges of managing and effectively integrating geospatial and statistical information nationally and globally. In 2013, in each of their respective annual sessions, they considered the Programme Review: "Developing a statistical-spatial framework in national statistical systems" and endorsed the review recommendations. They "acknowledged the critical importance of integrating geospatial information with statistics and socio-economic data and the development of a geospatial-statistical framework, especially in the context of the on-going debate on the post-2015 development agenda".

The Statistical Commission and UN-GGIM agreed to collaborate to find solutions in this area. They agreed to hold an international conference (this Global Forum) "as a way of reaching out and developing best practices, bringing together both statistical and geospatial professional communities". They also decided to create an Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information "to carry out work on developing a statistical-spatial framework as a global standard for the integration of statistical and geospatial information". The first meeting of this Expert Group was held in New York from the 30 October to 1 November 2013 and is composed of experts with an even professional mix of statistical and geospatial expertise, with good geographical representation.

The first meeting of the Expert Group considered the international conference proposal, and recommended that the objective would be best met by holding a high level forum. Such a forum would attract senior leaders to discuss the strategic vision and goals for the Integration of

Statistical and Geospatial Information. The forum was subsequently named the Global Forum on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information.

The Global Forum will take place on Monday 4th and Tuesday 5th August, 2014. The dates coincide with the Fourth Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) which will take place in New York, 6-8th August. By joining the two events, maximum attendance by the statistical and geospatial senior leaders is anticipated.

The Co-Chairs of the Experts Group on the Integration of Statistics and Geospatial Information met with the UN-GGIM Secretariat and Mr Tim Trainor, US Census Bureau, in Beijing on 11 June 2014, to discuss the Global Forum agenda. This concept note outlines the outcomes of that meeting.

Objectives of the Forum

Provide a forum for leaders in the statistical and geospatial communities to come together for the following purposes:

- To develop a shared sense of strategic purpose for the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information.

- To have a common voice in information discussions, such as the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

- To better understand emerging information agendas (e.g. the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the 2020 Round of Population Censuses, a global map for sustainable development).

- To jointly set the direction for technical capacity development.

- To jointly acknowledge the importance of the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information so that the international collaboration efforts at the operational and technical level can proceed with authority.

- To jointly acknowledge the need for a mechanism, such as a global statistical geospatial framework, to facilitate consistent production and integration approaches for geo-statistical information.

Organizers

The United Nations Statistics Division of DESA, as the Secretariat of the Statistical Commission and UN-GGIM, will organize this Global Forum with substantive support from the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information. The forum will be convened at UN headquarters in New York, and will include some side events. It is expected that up to 150 participants from both the geospatial and statistical professional communities will attend.

Forum Format

The Global Forum will be bringing together for the first time the heads of national statistical offices and national geospatial information authorities from Member States, to discuss the strategic vision and goals for the integration of statistics and geospatial information. The Forum format will consist of a day and half of international presentations and dialogue in specific sessions and themes from Monday 4 to Tuesday lunch 5 August. The draft format is as described in the table below.

Global Forum Monday 4 August	**Welcome and Opening Session** Keynote presentations considering a shared sense of strategic purpose and the global context.	09:00-10:15
	Break	10:15-10:30
	Session 1 - Positioning for the future Understanding the 5-10 year agenda and future information needs.	10:30-12:30
	Lunch	12:30-14:00
	Session 2 – Achieving the vision A global statistical geospatial information framework as a mechanism for achieving integration, and a discussion on a roadmap for achieving the vision.	14:00-15:30
	Break	15:30-16:00
	Session 2 – Achieving the vision (continued) A global statistical geospatial information framework as a mechanism for achieving integration, and a discussion on a roadmap for achieving the vision.	16:00-18:00
Global Forum Tuesday 5 August	**Session 3 – Population Census – an exemplar for integration** How to combine and integrate geography and statistics. 2020 round of Population Censuses.	09:00-10:30
	Break	10:30-10:45
	Session 4 – How to get there – the strategic opportunities Focus on 3-4 key strategic issues that are essential to the vision of integrated statistical-geospatial solutions. Concluding remarks and next steps.	10:45-12:30

Expected Outcomes

The following Global Forum outcomes are envisaged:

1. Understanding of the strategic vision and goals for the integration of statistical and geospatial information and recognition of the value proposition of the integration;

2. Recognizing that a statistical-geospatial framework has a vital role to play in integrating diverse economic, social and environmental information to support more robust decision-making processes across many sectors of the economy, nationally, regionally and globally. It also extends the ability for nations to not only map their geography and environment, but also their populations, demographics, and many other statistical variables at multiple levels of aggregation;

3. An emerging understanding of the key issues and challenges to developing a statistical-geospatial framework, especially in the context of geocoding data requirements and methodologies;

4. A better understanding of future challenges and other required actions to be taken by both the national geospatial information agencies and the national statistical offices in integrating statistical and geospatial information, and recognition that institutional coordination and collaboration is key to the success of integration;

5. Recognizing that institutional integration within a country to support statistical and geospatial integration requires a strong political commitment;

6. Identifying possible mechanisms and strategies for positioning the importance of the integration of geospatial and statistical information for the 2020 Round of Censuses and the broader post-2015 development agenda; and

7. Identifying a possible pilot project that demonstrates the steps and processes required to integrate national geospatial and statistical information.