Expert Group Meeting
Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators
Working Group on Geospatial Information
(IAEG-SDGs: WGGI)

United Nations Headquarters, New York,
6 – 8 December 2017

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

The global importance of geospatial information was recognized by the United Nations in July 2011 when, at its 47th plenary meeting, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), recognizing the urgent need to take concrete action to strengthen international cooperation in global geospatial information management, established the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM). UN-GGIM is the peak inter-governmental mechanism to make joint decisions and set directions on the production and use of geospatial information within national and global policy frameworks. In July 2016, ECOSOC adopted resolution 2016/27 on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management, in which it recognized that the Committee of Experts had operated effectively and was well placed to continue to contribute to the work of the United Nations, having explicitly recognized the relevance of geospatial information for the various United Nations policy agendas, particularly the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. ECOSOC strengthened and broadened the mandate of the Committee and invited the Committee to report on all matters relating to geography, geospatial information and related topics.

The General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, in which the Assembly adopted 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', which specifically recognizes the need for new data acquisition and integration approaches to improve the availability, quality, timeliness and disaggregation of data to support the implementation of the new development agenda at all levels, including "to exploit the contribution to be made by a wide range of data, including earth observations and geospatial information, while ensuring national ownership in supporting and tracking progress" (para 76). The follow-up and review processes at all levels will be guided by a series of principles, one of which is to "be rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated, including by geographic locations, relevant in national contexts". (para 74.g).

On 10 July 2017, the General Assembly in its resolution 71/313, adopted the global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, as annexed to the resolution. The global indicator framework was earlier agreed upon by the Statistical Commission at its forty-eighth session, held from 7 to 10 March 2017. The resolution stressed that official statistics and data from national statistical systems constitute the basis needed for the global indicator framework and recommends that national statistical systems explore ways to integrate new data sources into their systems to satisfy new data needs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDG indicators should be disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location, or other characteristics, in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics[1].

The Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management at its seventh session from 2 – 4 August 2017 noted that geospatial information can provide enabling methodologies and processes for disaggregation of data by geographic location, and that the disaggregation of national statistical data is considerably strengthened through geospatial information, and referencing the principles within the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework as developed by the Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information[2].

IAEG-SDGs Working Group on Geospatial Information

The Working Group is currently composed of 16 national representatives who are subject matter experts from 15 Member States. In addition, the Working Group includes 7 experts representing the United Nations system and international organizations. The Working Group is co-chaired by Sweden and Mexico. The primary objective of the Working Group is to ensure, from a statistical and geographic location perspective, that the key principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to leave no one behind, is achieved via the global indicator framework, and that everyone can be counted.

Activities for 2017/18 period.

The Terms of Reference called for the Working Group to provide expertise, advice and guidance to the IAEG-SDGs and the wider statistical community on how geospatial information, Earth observations and other new data sources can reliably and consistently contribute to the production of indicators. The Working Group had identified a short-list of 24 indicators, categorized under two tables, and working with this short-list of indicators, the Working Group will:

1 General Assembly Resolution A/RES/71/313

2 http://ggim.un.org/docs/meetings/GGIM7/E-C20-2017-11%20Geospatial%20Information%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20Report.pdf

a) Identify existing geospatial data gaps, geospatial methodological and measurement issues;

b) Consider how geospatial information can contribute to the indicators and metadata;

c) Propose means of addressing these data and methodological gaps and measurement issues: and

d) Address availability, accessibility and application of geospatial information, earth observation and other new data sources including internationally (globally) available data sets and data models for analysis and production of indicators

Regarding the global indicator framework, the Working Group will:

e) Provide guidance on methodological work on specific areas for improving disaggregation by geographic location;

f) Provide guidance to IAEG-SDGs on the role of national statistical systems when applying geospatial information and earth observation as means to contribute to and validate data as part of official statistics; and

g) Provide national and regional experiences and good practices including case studies in applying geospatial data to measure and monitor "leaving no one behind".

Participation

All members of the Working Group (23 members) comprising expert representatives of either national statistical offices or national mapping/geospatial information agencies, United Nations System and international organizations are invited to participate. Several expert representatives who have subject matter expertise from non-member countries of the IAEG-SDGs: WGGI, United Nations System, international organizations, and academic and research organizations may be invited to the meeting.

Objective

Experts at this meeting are expected to develop advice and guidance to the IAEG-SDGs and the wider statistical community on how geospatial information, Earth observations and other new data sources can reliably and consistently contribute to the production of indicators.