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UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

OPENING STATEMENT

**Kunming Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management
“Cities of the Future: Smart, Resilient and Sustainable”**

Kunming, China, 10-12 May 2017

Your Excellency Mr. Kurexi Maihesuti, Vice Minister, Ministry of Land and Resources, Director-General, National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China;

Your Excellency Dr Liu Huiyan, Vice Governor of Yunnan Province of China;

Dr. Li Pengde, Deputy Director General, National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China, Co-Chair of UN-GGIM;

Dear Participants and Colleagues,

On behalf of the United Nations, I warmly welcome you to the Kunming Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management, or UN-GGIM, with the theme ‘Cities of the Future: Smart, Resilient and Sustainable’.

I am delighted to see such a diverse range of professionals gathered here. We have strong representation from the Asia-Pacific region, as well as all other geographic regions around the world, and including international organizations and the geospatial industry. This is a truly global Forum.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Kurexi Maihesuti, Dr. Li Pengde, and the entire team from the National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China for organizing and hosting this Forum.

In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Liu Huiyan, Vice Governor of Yunnan Province, the Yunnan Government, and people of Yunnan for hosting us in this beautiful city of Kunming – the City of Eternal Spring. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to bring these important discussions to this dynamic and progressive region.

I also thank the Regional Committee of UN-GGIM for Asia and the Pacific for its efforts in promoting the work of UN-GGIM-Asia-Pacific, including the Kunming Forum.

Distinguished participants,

The UN-GGIM agenda is evolving quickly at a time when our world is facing multiple development challenges. This was clearly recognised in July 2016 when the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted a resolution on ‘Strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management’. This resolution represents a milestone for UN-GGIM and its Committee of Experts. It strengthens and broadens the mandate of the Committee on all matters relating to geography, geospatial information and related topics. It also stresses the need to strengthen the coordination and coherence of global geospatial information management, capacity-development and norm-setting. These are critical needs for our Member States.

This Kunming Forum is a chance to respond to these needs. Given the rapidly evolving challenges and opportunities for cities to ensure the wellbeing of urban dwellers, it is very timely. The technical programme will address a number of topics emphasizing the role and contribution of geospatial information in shaping and building smart, resilient and sustainable cities of the future. This strategic emphasis also aligns with ECOSOC’s main theme for its 2018 session “From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities”.

In your deliberations this week you will discuss a range of important topics such as: visioning the cities of the future; leveraging innovation and technology; emerging approaches and methods in data collection, mapping and modelling; integrative information systems and their growing analytical needs; geospatial information and services for disasters; cooperation and partnerships; capability and capacity development; and the geographic dimensions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Concerning this last topic, the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) Working Group on Geospatial Information has also been meeting this week on the margins of the Kunming Forum. The IAEG-SDGs and the global statistical community highly value your contribution on geospatial information. I welcome this important leadership.

Distinguished colleagues,

I am pleased to see the global diversity of expertise at this Forum. UN-GGIM's role is to evolve this important community of practice. It assists us in shaping the national information systems, it influences the common practices, methodologies and frameworks we develop, and it brings our community together to build a better system to harness the power of geospatial information. I invite you, as experts from many different countries, to work together to this end.

The discussions here will provide input into the global decision-making mechanism – the Committee of Experts on UN-GGIM – at its seventh session this coming August at UN Headquarters in New York.

At the United Nations, we will do our best to develop and advance UN-GGIM together with all the Member States, with support from all of you.

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

Thank you for your continued support to the work and vision of UN-GGIM.
