



Fifth High Level Forum on UN Global Geospatial Information Management

Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: The Role of Geospatial Technology and Innovation

28-30 November 2017

Sheraton Maria Isabel Hotel, Mexico City, Mexico

Concept Note

Background

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), in collaboration with the Government of Mexico through the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), and Geospatial Media and Communications will convene the **Fifth High Level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management at the Sheraton Maria Isabel Hotel in Mexico City from 28 – 30 November 2017**. This fifth edition of UN-GGIM's High Level Forums will have the substantive support from each of the five Regional Committees of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM: Americas, UN-GGIM: Asia Pacific, UN-GGIM: Africa, UN-GGIM: Arab States and UN-GGIM: Europe), as well as the UN-GGIM Private Sector Network, the UN-GGIM Academic Network and the UN-GGIM Geospatial Societies.

The Fifth High Level Forum is being staged in pursuance of the mandate from the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to convene global forums to promote comprehensive dialogue on global geospatial information management with all relevant governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The event will continue the discussions and consultations from previous High Level Forums, provide follow-up on issues from the formal inter-governmental meetings of the Committee of Experts, and provide Member States and geospatial stakeholders with the unique opportunity to share and learn from each other, new ideas, methods and strategies to support local, regional and global geospatial technologies and innovation related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Geospatial technologies and services, strengthening data production, and the use of better data in policymaking and monitoring, are becoming increasingly recognized as fundamental means for global development. Such data and services have the real potential of forming a new and emerging 'data ecosystem' for development in which integrated information systems, that are comprehensive and coordinated, are able to monitor the state of the Earth, people and planet, and to deliver timely information necessary to citizens, organizations and governments to build accountability and make informed and evidenced-based decisions.



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a new global policy to guide the way countries collectively manage and transform the social, economic and environmental dimensions of people, planet and prosperity through to at least 2030. The broad and transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda poses tremendous challenges in ensuring that no one is left behind. It also provides tremendous opportunity for the geospatial community to meet the unprecedented need for more and new sources of data covering all countries and all aspects of development. The 2030 Agenda demands new data acquisition and integration approaches and the need for ‘high quality, timely, reliable and disaggregated data, including Earth observations and geospatial information’, and with commensurate new and innovative data sources and methods.

In response to these urgent and multi-dimensional data needs, the Fifth High Level Forum on UN-GGIM will facilitate an in-depth dialogue on geospatial technology and innovation, and the importance of public-private partnerships for the promotion of geospatial knowledge and services to attain the 17 aspirational SDGs. Therefore, and with an overarching theme **‘Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: The Role of Geospatial Technology and Innovation’** the High Level Forum will provide Member States and geospatial information stakeholders the unique opportunity to exchange knowledge, practices and experiences and afford peer-to-peer learning on strategies, approaches and methods to support sub-national, national and regional initiatives towards increasing the availability, accessibility and application of high-quality, reliable and timely geospatial information for sustainable development.

Context

As the implementation of the 2030 Agenda gains momentum and the world begins to consider in more detail, and with more urgency, how to measure, monitor and report progress on the SDGs and their associated targets and indicators, Member States and the global community are now also beginning to better understand the commensurate prospects for using geospatial information as fundamental inputs for realizing the 2030 Agenda. As noted by UN-GGIM at its seventh session in August 2017, achieving sustainable development will require transformative change, not only in delivering on such a broad and ambitious agenda, but also in how the right data is brought to bear to measure and monitor progress. The professional geospatial, statistical, and other related communities, should be ambitious and aspire to have the needed data – social, economic and environmental – to ensure that the world can ‘count’ everyone and leave no one behind. This is at the core of being able to measure and monitor in order to make progress, particularly for the developing countries.

In the second annual report on global sustainable development progress ‘Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017’ released in July 2017, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres observed that although implementation has begun, the clock is ticking, and that the rate of progress in many areas is far slower than needed to meet the targets by 2030. The Secretary-General stressed that high-level political leadership and new partnerships will be essential for sustaining momentum; underscoring the need for reliable, timely, accessible and disaggregated data to measure progress, inform decision-making and ensure that everyone is counted.

The situation with the global development agenda will not remain static and will evolve quickly in the years ahead. This will be driven by a need for robust reporting systems on the SDGs that will have applicability and benefit from the local, sub-national to the national level; while still allowing for global reporting that builds directly on the integrated data shared by countries. It will be important, likely a requirement, to address means to create an opportunity for countries to directly contribute to the global reporting within a geospatial



context. While the challenges are immense, the geospatial technology, innovation, platforms and solutions that are available today, and facilitated by strong public-private partnerships, allow the necessary digital transformation. Therefore, an aspiration for UN-GGIM, to ‘strengthen geospatial information management,’ is to strengthen countries’ geospatial and statistical information capabilities towards integrative national information systems that enable a growing ‘data ecosystem’ that leverages an accessible, integrative and interoperable local to global system-of-systems.

Forum Outcomes

The Fifth High Level Forum offers the opportunity for the global geospatial information community to pay particular attention to the role of geospatial technology and innovation in implementing the SDGs, and aims to substantively improve and strengthen the national geospatial information management capacities of countries, particularly developing countries, towards implementing the 2030 Agenda and evidence-based policy and decision making. Bringing all stakeholders together, the Forum will provide Member States and geospatial stakeholders with the unique opportunity to share and learn from each other, new ideas, methods and strategies to support local to global sustainable development implementations with geospatial technology and innovation.

Objectives of the Forum will be to discuss the integration of geospatial knowledge, platforms and services to facilitate informed decision making, empowering people for better sustainable management and development of the Earth’s finite resources. This will enable and drive national government agencies, the commercial sector, multilateral and international development organizations, academia and civil society to pursue sustainable development using geospatial knowledge and services. It will also continue to raise political awareness and highlight the importance of these technologies to decision makers.

Forum Outline

The continued involvement of the geospatial industry and academia at the most senior levels will be a key component of the Forum’s technical program. It will actively engage with the industry in discussions regarding issues of both policy and technology throughout the sessions. The Forum program will continue the tradition of opening with a Ministerial Segment in order for high level decision-makers to share and exchange views with delegates on the very important role of geospatial information and technology in national sustainable development initiatives.

The Forum will then feature technical presentations, group discussions and a series of panel sessions that demonstrate the considerable collaboration and liaison among global experts of the geospatial community, public-private professional bodies, including United Nations organizations, and other internationally acclaimed development organizations for optimum adoption and utilization of geospatial platforms and services. Featured topics will discuss the critical role of geospatial knowledge and services in a number of sectors and thematic areas of the SDGs. This will assist in understanding the requirements of geospatial information to support accurate monitoring of progress, and assist in identifying challenges for successful realization of these goals.



Tuesday, 28 November

Opening Ceremony and Ministerial Segment

The opening session will begin with welcome statements, an opening address and keynote speeches. The Ministerial Segment will then connect geospatial information to national development leadership through statements by invited Ministers on the policy relevance and role of geospatial technology and innovation in providing national implementations for measuring and monitoring the SDGs. These statements will be followed by a high-level moderated panel discussion with Forum participants.

Session 1: Implementing the SDGs: The relevance of geography and reliable, timely, accessible and disaggregated data

With 17 SDGs, 169 targets and 232 global indicators in order to measure and monitor development progress, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is framed by the intrinsic relationship between people and their environment, their place and their geography. With new data acquisition and integration approaches, including Earth observations and geospatial information recognized, and with commensurate new and innovative data sources and methods required, this session will feature a panel discussion that examines the relevance of geography to implement the SDGs. The session will discuss the UN Secretary-General's plea for high-level political leadership and new partnerships as being essential for sustaining momentum; underscoring the need for reliable, timely, accessible and disaggregated data to measure progress, inform decision-making and ensure that everyone is counted.

Wednesday, 29 November

Session 2: Geospatial knowledge platforms: Empowering the SDGs through geographic tools and services

Geospatial technologies and services, strengthening data production and the use of better data in policymaking and monitoring, are becoming increasingly recognized as fundamental means for global development. Such data and services have the real potential of forming a new and emerging 'data ecosystem' for development, in which integrated information systems that are comprehensive and coordinated are able to monitor the state of the Earth, people and planet, and to deliver timely information necessary to citizens, organizations and governments to build accountability and make good, evidenced-based decisions. However, we still need to democratize these technologies and associated data in such a way that they are easily reachable and useable by developing countries, as they not only bring data together but also people, processes and results. With the enabling global mechanism of the 2030 Agenda, this panel session will discuss the challenges and solutions to most effectively democratize and transfer the available geospatial knowledge, technologies, platforms and services to the technology and data poor.



Session 3: Implementing the SDGs: The role of geospatial research and innovation

The broad and transformative nature of the 2030 Agenda poses tremendous challenges in ensuring that no one is left behind. It also provides tremendous opportunity for the global geospatial professional community to meet the unprecedented need for more and new sources of data covering all countries and all aspects of development. However, in order to meet these ‘data for development’ needs, the scaling up of geospatial research and innovation, including data integration, interoperability, analytics, modelling, management and dissemination across multiple sectors and themes, will be required to demonstrate the true potential of geospatial technology. Therefore, this panel session will exchange ideas and present tangible examples of how multidisciplinary collaborations in promoting geospatial information science, academic research and innovation are being leveraged to support the development of geospatial technologies, infrastructures, knowledge platforms, and strategic frameworks for the enhancement of capacity building, the collection and sharing of geospatial data, and inter-institutional partnerships local to global sustainable development objectives and policymaking.

Thursday, 30 November

Session 4: Integrated information systems: A national priority for implementing the SDGs

In July 2016, the Economic and Social Council adopted resolution 2016/27 on strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management. As reported at its seventh session in August 2017, UN-GGIM is now taking practical and strategic actions to implement resolution 2016/27. To ‘strengthen geospatial information management,’ is to strengthen countries’ geospatial and statistical information capabilities towards integrative national information systems that enable a growing ‘data ecosystem’ that leverages an accessible, integrative and interoperable local to global system-of-systems. Recognizing the need for a robust geospatial infrastructure for the management and monitoring of the SDGs, this panel session will explore how countries and organizations are strengthening the production and use of timely and reliable geospatial data and information which meet the needs of national implementations of the 2030 Agenda, are policy relevant, and provide government users, decision makers and researchers with data, tools and methods to make appropriate and evidence-based decisions.

Session 5: Public-private partnerships: Evolving integrated geospatial knowledge platforms

The 2030 Agenda calls for stronger public-private partnerships in order to exploit the contribution to be made by a wide range of data, including Earth observations and geospatial information, and for new data sources and technologies to be harnessed. Public-private partnerships have the ability to support and enable government agencies, the commercial sector, multilateral and international development organisations, and civil society to pursue sustainable development using geospatial knowledge and services. Although an ambition is to integrate geospatial knowledge platforms and services to facilitate informed decision making, and empowering people for better sustainable management and development of the Earth’s resources, there is a recognition that data still needs to be more available and open, platforms need to be more usable and analytics need to be more accessible – especially for developing countries. In this panel session, leading industry experts will discuss and demonstrate the current status of the rapidly evolving geospatial data solutions and platforms that are able to support the implementation of the SDGs.

Summary and issuing of the Mexico City Declaration

