



# United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS  
FOR GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT: Licensing of Geospatial Information  
7 – 9 November 2017, Tianjin, China

## SUMMARY STATEMENT

*“Strengthening National Geospatial Information Management,  
addressing the data needs of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) recognised the need to develop mechanism to improve the capacity of national geospatial information authorities (national surveying and mapping agencies) to address the legal and policy considerations that have an impact on the availability, accessibility and application of geospatial information. The Committee of Experts is the peak inter-governmental mechanism to liaise and coordinate among Member States, and between Member States, international organizations and stakeholders, to foster better coordination and coherence in geospatial information management.

This International Workshop is the first in a series of regional peer-to-peer learning events on Legal and Policy Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management aimed to raise awareness, introduce and inform participants on practical approaches that participants should find helpful in their normal work. The goal was for both providers and consumers of geospatial information to be better aware and informed on how a country’s legal and policy framework impacts geospatial information management. The core component of this regional level peer-to-peer learning event was four modules that addressed:

1. Legal and policy framework around geospatial information management -  
Highlighted the different types of laws and policies that impact the collection, storage, dissemination and use of geospatial information and provided examples of laws and policies around the world, and the impact that these laws and policies have on geospatial information management.
2. Role and options on licensing in geospatial information management -  
Explained the role of geospatial information license (nomenclature differs in different jurisdictions, including, terms of use, arrangement, legal notice, data sharing agreement,) and why licensing is critical in the availability and accessibility of geospatial products and services.
3. Key legal issues in geospatial information management -  
Discussed legal concepts and operational considerations that address and allocate rights, restrictions, responsibilities and risks within a geospatial information ecosystem that includes collectors, custodians, customers and citizens.
4. Emerging legal and policy trends that will impact geospatial information management -  
Highlighted a rapidly evolving technological and communication environment with emerging and varied applications and markets, where “geo” (location) is pervasive, where the geospatial information community have a proactive role in helping shape emerging legal and policy issues.

28 presentations were delivered over three days, 10 of which were presentations from national agencies providing national perspectives, and five presentations that gave regional take on this capacity development mechanism. Group and open discussion segments were energetic with an elevated level in sharing knowledge and experience, national context and challenges. These exchanges continued beyond the scheduled sessions. A number of participants shared unique circumstances, and sought out experiences and examples that they can consider when they return to their home country. Some participants highlighted constraints they have to work to including an absence of legislative and regulatory provisions. The “Geo-divide” again surfaced, whilst many sought to extend the use of their data sets with appropriate legal and policy tools, many are still seeking to develop their fundamental data sets. And when there is data, some sought appropriate legal and policy tools to share and disseminate information, and some to work within a jurisdiction’s open data policy environment.

Many participants acknowledged the need for considerations and efforts to ensure (and for some, to enforce) adherence to provisions within any geospatial information license or data exchange/data sharing arrangements. A number of examples were shared, including approaches such as audits, declarations, regular customer-facing education and engagements. A number of participants shared their challenges and approaches to address issues around the misuse of data, data privacy and data protection, acknowledged a need for better understanding of these issues particularly within the national context. To progress along, stakeholder engagement and consultation are needed.

Some participants expressed a desire for more time for discussions during the workshop, and interactions with presenters. Others expressed the need to avail opportunities to socialise and network with each other within a more relaxed setting. Some participants expressed a need for similar events at sub-regional levels where there could be some contextual similarities, proceeding into country-level workshops to support Member States to work through and address legal and policy considerations within their country-level situation. In this regard, Regional Committees on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management will have to consider appropriate modalities and resources to continue developing capacity in Member States. The Working Group on Legal and Policy Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management had an informal meeting on the side of the International Workshop.

There were a total of 34 participants, 32 of whom came from 19 Member States, one resource person and one staff of the United Nations Secretariat. Also in attendance was a dedicated and efficient support team comprising of staff members from the National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China and MapWorld (Tianjin) Co. Ltd. The 32 participants, representatives of national agencies, came from least developed countries, Small Island developing states, land locked developing countries, developing (including middle income) and developed countries. These participants came from all five regions within UN-GGIM regional architecture, namely, Africa, Americas, Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe.

The International Workshop on Legal and Policy Framework for Geospatial Information Management expressed its thanks and appreciation to the Government of Peoples Republic of China, the National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China (NASG), the Regional Committee of Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific (UN-GGIM-AP), the China Trust Fund Project on Global Geospatial Information Management, and everyone of the 32 participants and their country for contributing to a successful peer-to-peer learning event organised by the United Nations Secretariat for Global Geospatial Information Management with the support of the Centre for Spatial Law and Policy.

