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Welcome remarks
International Seminar on United Nations
Global Geospatial Information Management
“The Data Ecosystem for Sustainable Development”

Deqing, Zhejiang Province, China
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Mr. Kurexi Maihesuti, Vice Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources of China,
Mr. Feng Fei, Executive Vice Governor, Zhejiang Provincial Government,
Excellencies,
Distinguished participants

I am delighted to welcome you to this Deqing International Seminar on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management, with the theme *‘The Data Ecosystem for Sustainable Development’* here at what is now the ‘geospatially famous’ Deqing International Convention Centre, the home of the first United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress convened here last November. It is a pleasure to be here at this wonderful geospatial venue once again, as it carries fond memories for me, and I am sure for many of you also.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of China, through the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Zhejiang Provincial Government, for supporting my Department in hosting this series of meetings in Deqing once again. We are most fortunate to be able to work with such dedicated, engaging and, not the least, hospitable partners. As I am sure you will now know, every effort has been made to ensure that our time in Deqing is enjoyable.

Colleagues,

In his opening statement at the World Congress last year, the Secretary-General of the United Nations emphasized that geospatial information, methods, frameworks, tools, and enabling platforms is urgently needed to ensure that reliable, timely, accessible and disaggregated geospatial information is able to measure progress, inform decision-making and chart the path towards the implementation of the SDGs.

There continues to be an urgent need for more integration across the various national information systems and platforms so that we are able to leverage the best and most efficient data and analysis for policy and evidence-based decision making for the SDGs. With this International

Seminar, you are following up on that urgent implementation need. For that, the United Nations thanks you.

I am aware that in the pursuit of these important ambitions, especially for developing countries, that a number of you have in fact been here in Deqing already for a number of days. A 3-day technical capacity and capability development workshop for invited participants from selected developing countries was convened last week. Supported by geospatial industry experts from Esri, the hands-on workshop improved the knowledge and understanding of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, the importance of nationally integrated geospatial information management, and the vital and integrative role of geospatial information as an enabler for the SDGs.

The Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, being developed and implemented in collaboration with the World Bank, is an overarching Framework that provides all countries, but especially developing countries, with a practical guide that translates high-level strategic geospatial information concepts into practical national implementation and action. This technical capacity building workshop was the first in a series of capacity and capability development efforts to realize the vital and integrative role of geospatial information conducted by my Department as the Secretariat on Global Geospatial Information Management.

Yesterday, a technical briefing and visit on the Deqing SDGs Profile informed the workshop participants of the development and progress of the work that Deqing has been undertaking in formulating SDG indicators within the Deqing SDGs Data Hub. The briefing allowed participants to understand first-hand the efforts and progress in the application of geospatial information and its integration with statistical and other data for sustainable development at a local government level in China.

Colleagues,

Geospatial information is being used in an increasing number of countries to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda and the review of progress towards the Goals, showing and tracking social and economic progress, as well as the impacts of human activities on the environment. But we need to do more. We must dramatically accelerate progress over the next decade – the decade for action and delivery for sustainable development.

Over these next two days, this International Seminar will seek to improve awareness and understanding of geospatial information. You will have the opportunity to discuss and interact on the data ecosystem for sustainable development. Where integrated information systems, enriched by geospatial information, provide the evidence on the state of the earth, people, and the environment, to deliver the timely information necessary for governments and citizens to build accountability and make informed and evidenced-based decisions. With this context, I urge you to also consider how we may be able to accelerate the formulation and implementation of actionable outcomes for the SDGs.

Dear colleagues,

The convening of this International Seminar and Workshop at this prestigious venue is not by coincidence. We hope to convene such meetings and dialogues more in the future. As you may be aware, and warmly welcomed and appreciated by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) at its ninth session, my Department and the Ministry of Natural Resources of China are jointly developing and advancing a proposal to establish a United Nations Global Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Centre in Deqing.

Both parties are now advancing in more detail the arrangements and cooperation modalities to operationalize the Centre, including to expedite a Memorandum of Understanding and associated Host Country Agreement between the Government of China and the United Nations. In this regard, just yesterday afternoon I participated in the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the establishment of the Global Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Centre.

The establishment of the Centre aims to improve and strengthen national geospatial information management, to assist developing countries, and to support a capacity-building program to implement the SDGs. The Centre will facilitate the development of contemporary methods and technologies in geospatial information that will access national to regional and global SDG information and data sources through the creation of appropriate technologies, standards, frameworks and mechanisms. The outcomes of these meetings will have a key role to play in providing governance and guidance to ensure coherence of the aims and activities of the Centre with that of your work.

Colleagues,

In closing, I wish you a productive International Seminar and look forward to your deliberations and outcomes over the next two days, and in making real progress on critical national to global geospatial and development issues.

Thank you.
