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Geospatial information and services for disasters

Geospatial information and services for disasters

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report of the Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its ninth session, held in New York from 7 to 9 August 2019, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 9/109, in which it welcomed the report of the Working Group and its efforts in advancing critical issues related to geospatial information and services for disasters. The Committee noted the areas for the Working Group to consider in its future work, including linkages to other international initiatives and actors in disaster risk reduction and management, the design and implementation of scenario-based exercises on different hazards and alignment of its work with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework. In addition, it commended the Working Group on the preparation of the Assessment Survey on the Strategic Framework as a tool to help Member States to develop national implementation plans for geospatial information and services in support of disaster risk reduction and management. In this present report, the Working Group provides information on its intersessional activities, including the revision of its terms of reference, implementation of the Assessment Survey tool, updates on work being undertaken by a number of task teams and the modalities to assist the Statistical Commission in the development of a global statistical framework on disaster-related statistics. The report contains information on additional activities under consideration by the Working Group, including the geospatial community's response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, encouraging and strengthening Member State participation in the Working Group's activities and encouraging greater coordination and collaboration with regional committees and thematic networks of the Committee of Experts and the United Nations regional commissions on activities relevant to geospatial information and services for disaster risk reduction.

* E/C.20/2020/20

I. Introduction

1. The fundamental importance of geospatial data, and its supporting tools to all phases of disaster risk management, has been evidenced over the past five months with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. Governments, at national and local levels, the private sector, academia, civil society and citizens have been knowingly and unknowingly using geospatial data to map the spread of the disease, predict the behaviour of humans to determine intervention strategies, design response and mitigation measures, and visualize its impacts among other actions. This pandemic emphasizes the need to strengthen the efforts of the Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters (Working Group) to support the creation and use of quality geospatial data and services that are available and accessible in a timely and coordinated manner across all levels of government to support decision-making throughout all phases of disaster risk management. Further, it is a call to action for Member States to implement the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters (Strategic Framework), which contributes to the implementation of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The Strategic Framework is also fundamental to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular: Goal 1- no poverty; Goal 2 - zero hunger; Goal 11- sustainable cities and communities; and Goal 15- life on land.

2. At its ninth session, held in New York from 7 to 9 August 2019, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 9/109, in which it welcomed the report of the Working Group ([E/C.20/2020/12](#)), and its efforts in advancing critical issues related to geospatial information and services for disasters. The Committee of Experts also noted the suggestions for the Working Group's future work, including: mechanisms to review its operational modalities; linkages to other international initiatives and actors in disaster risk reduction and management; implementation and awareness-raising of the Strategic Framework; support for the Statistical Commission to advance disaster-related statistics; design and implementation of scenario-based exercises on different hazards, including predictive modelling to test and improve the Strategic Framework; ensuring the accessibility and capacity of geospatial information and services in times of disasters; and alignment of its work with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF).

3. Further, the Committee of Experts commended the Working Group on the preparation of the Assessment Survey on the Strategic Framework and endorsed the Survey as a tool to help Member States to develop national implementation plans for geospatial information and services in support of disaster risk reduction and management. The Committee also commended the Philippines, as outgoing co-Chair of the Working Group, for its leadership and substantial contribution towards developing the Strategic Framework and towards the subsequent adoption of the Framework by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 2018/14 of 2 July 2018, and welcomed Japan as co-Chair of the Working Group, together with Jamaica.

4. In this present report, the Working Group provides information on its intersessional activities, including the revision of its terms of reference, implementation of the Assessment Survey tool, updates on work being undertaken by its task teams and the modalities to assist the Statistical Commission in the development of a global statistical framework on disaster-related statistics. The report contains information on additional activities under consideration by the Working Group, including the geospatial community's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging and strengthening Member State participation in the Working Group's activities and encouraging greater coordination and collaboration with regional committees and thematic networks of the Committee of Experts and the United Nations regional commissions. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the report and to consider endorsing the Working Group's revised terms of reference. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 40.

II. Activities of the Working Group

Revision of the Working Group's Terms of Reference

5. In keeping with decision 9/109 of the Committee of Experts at its ninth session, which asked the Working Group to review its operational modalities, the Group conducted an exercise to redraft its terms of reference. Commencing in September 2019, the co-Chairs led the exercise, and with the assistance of the Secretariat, prepared draft terms of reference taking into consideration the items for its future work, as outlined in decision 9/109. The draft terms of reference underwent two rounds of consultations among Working Group members in February and May 2020, and were approved by the Group at its virtual meeting on 20 May 2020. The draft terms of reference are provided in Annex I of this report for consideration and endorsement by the Committee of Experts.

Working Group meetings

6. During the intersessional period, the Working Group convened three virtual meetings, on 18 March, 20 May, and 24 June 2020. Discussions primarily focused on the execution of the five objectives approved at the ninth session of the Committee of Experts in August 2019. These included the revision of the Working Group's terms of reference to better guide its operations, updating the membership list, implementing the Assessment Survey tool, pursuing meaningful strategies towards collaborations with other disaster risk reduction groups and bodies and strategic initiatives to support response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

7. The first meeting was held on 18 March 2020, and attended by 21 participants from China, Jamaica, Japan, New Zealand, Sweden, Thailand, Uzbekistan, the UN-GGIM Academic Network, UNESCAP, the Group on Earth Observations, MapAction, GeoThings, CIESIN of Columbia University, and the Secretariat. Items addressed were the revision of the Working Group's terms of reference and updates on the activities of the four task groups. Also discussed was the Working Group's possible response to COVID-19.

8. The second virtual meeting, on 20 May 2020, was attended by 34 participants from China, Jamaica, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, Poland, Sweden, Thailand, the State of Palestine, the UN-GGIM Academic Network, UNESCAP, UNECA, MapAction, GeoThings, CIESIN of Columbia University, Esri, and the Secretariat. During this meeting the revised draft terms of reference were discussed and approved. In addition, a plan to develop the Group's work plan was initiated, and the second round of discussion to decide what measures should be taken to support Member States in their response to COVID-19 was held. Details on the Working Group's response to COVID-19 will be elaborated in section III of this report. The progress of each task group, including administering the Strategic Framework Assessment Survey tool, was reported during the meeting.

9. The third online meeting, on 24 June 2020, was attended by 30 participants from Armenia, China, Jamaica, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, Sint Maarten/Kingdom of Netherlands, Sweden, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Uzbekistan, the UN-GGIM Academic Network, UNDRR, UNESCAP, the World Meteorological Organization, MapAction, GeoThings, and the Secretariat. At this meeting the co-Chairs shared the outline of the Working Group's proposed report to the tenth session of the Committee of Experts, and elaborated on the plans to prepare a work plan based on its existing work and recent developments emanating from the COVID-19 pandemic. Discussed and agreed were strategies to be taken to increase awareness and to share information on the Strategic Framework and the Working Group's response to the global consultation on the IGIF. The Working Group also decided that in order to maintain the current momentum and advance

its work programme, quarterly virtual meetings will be convened. The Group's next virtual meeting will be held in October 2020.

10. The Working Group's objectives are accomplished through the work undertaken by its four task groups. The task groups are: A) Implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Framework; B) Design and implementation of scenario-based exercises on different hazards, including predictive modelling to test and improve the Strategic Framework per country and/or region; C) Support the Statistical Commission to advance a common statistical framework on disaster-related statistics; and D) Support the preparation of the IGIF. The following paragraphs provide a brief highlight of the activities performed by the task groups during the intersessional period.

Activities Task Group A - Implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Framework

11. A major work item for the Working Group is the implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Framework, which aims to strengthen the use of geospatial information across Member States in support of improved disaster related decision-making. An element of the implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Framework is the execution of the Assessment Survey. In August 2019 the Committee of Experts endorsed the Assessment Survey as a tool to assist Member States to develop national implementation plans for geospatial information and services in support of disaster risk reduction and management.

12. National mapping agencies and geospatial data management organizations, with the assistance of focal organizations mandated for disaster risk reduction and management, were invited by letter (3 June 2020) to complete on-line the [Assessment Survey](#). The objectives of the exercise are to assist the Working Group to better understand the status of the national geospatial information and services landscape across all phases of disasters, and to determine mechanisms and strategies to ensure the future implementation of the Strategic Framework.

13. The Working Group aims to receive a representative sample of responses from Member States to the Assessment Survey, in order to conduct a comprehensive analysis. As at 7 July 2020, the Working Group thanks the 36 Member States and organizations who have completed the Assessment Survey. To achieve the representative sample, the period within which the survey is to be completed was extended for an additional two months, thereby allowing more Member States to participate in the exercise. Thereafter, a comprehensive analysis of the responses will be undertaken, and a report with recommendations prepared and presented at the eleventh session of the Committee of Experts in August 2021.

Activities Task Group B - Design and implementation of scenario-based exercises

14. The major work item of task group B is to design and prepare scenario-based exercises on different hazards including predictive modelling, to test and improve the Strategic Framework per country and region. The group is led by Japan with members from Albania, China, Sweden, Uzbekistan, UNESCAP, MapAction and GeoThings, and representing multiple disciplines, such as remote sensing, service operations, and application development. It is important to note that the group's diversity contributes to its collective strength and ability to satisfactorily address its work items.

15. For the reporting period the members of task group B have been conducting virtual meetings aimed at planning the staging of a joint simulated operation to determine actions to be taken during an actual crisis. The group agreed that based on its work it represents a community of practice, one that shares a concern, a set of problems or passion about a topic and deepens their knowledge and expertise by interacting on an ongoing basis, as stated in the IGIF Implementation Guide.¹

¹ Strategic Pathway 8: Capacity and Education, Action 8.6.10. <http://ggim.un.org/IGIF/documents/SP8->

Activities Task Group C – Support a statistical framework on disaster-related statistics

16. Reference is made to decision 50/116² of the fiftieth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2019, relating to a new item on disaster-related statistics. The Statistical Commission urged the international statistical community to expand its capacity-building efforts in statistics relating to hazardous events and disasters. This effort recognizes the need to assist Member States in strengthening capacities for disaster management agencies, national statistical offices, and other related contributors of official data to meet reporting requirements for evidence-based approaches to developing national development policies, plans and programmes, the goals and targets in the Sendai Framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By way of decision 9/109 of the Committee of Experts at its ninth session, the Working Group committed to supporting the Statistical Commission to advance the development of a common framework for disaster-related statistics.

17. The administrative arrangements and modalities to support this work item are presently being prepared. The draft terms of reference for an inter-agency expert group on disaster-related statistics has been drafted and agreed on by the initiating partners in April 2020. The draft terms of reference are to be submitted to the next Statistical Commission in 2021 for approval. The terms of reference includes liaising with the Working Group to support the geospatial aspects of disaster-related statistics. The inter-agency expert group will be co-Chaired by the Statistics Division of UNESCAP and UNDRR, and with secretariat support provided by UNDRR. The next immediate work items are to confirm membership and prepare a programme of work.

18. The Working Group, through task group C which is led by Jamaica, remains committed to supporting the work of this new inter-agency expert group.

Activities Task Group D - Support the preparation of the IGIF

19. In pursuance of the decision to support the preparation of the IGIF, the Working Group sought to identify whether the IGIF and the Strategic Framework are aligned. The broad global consultation on the IGIF, which took place during the first half of 2020, presented the opportunity to conduct the exercise. This is the first step in considering how the IGIF can be used in tandem with the Strategic Framework. A comparison of the structure and content of both Frameworks was undertaken, including outcomes, goals, targets, principles and priorities. The review concluded that:

- a) The IGIF is supportive of, and mutually compatible with, the Strategic Framework;
- b) The IGIF should be the primary reference and guide used to develop implementable and detailed Action Plans to effect the improved use of geospatial data and services for disaster risk reduction and management; and
- c) The Strategic Framework remains highly relevant and a valuable resource for those using the IGIF to develop national geospatial Action Plans. It should, as appropriate to national circumstances, inform the development of country-level Action Plans to realize integrated geospatial information management.

20. Further, the review recommends that: the IGIF and Strategic Framework should clearly reference each other; the IGIF and its Implementation Guide should be leveraged to deliver the Strategic Framework priority actions and outcomes; the Strategic Framework must provide a clear reference and connection to the IGIF, in order that the priority actions it recommends are part of nationally integrated geospatial information management plans and

[Capacity and Education 19May2020 GLOBAL CONSULTATION.pdf](#)

² <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/50th-session/documents/Report-on-the-50th-session-of-the-statistical-commission-E.pdf>

that the relevance and utility of the Strategic Framework should be reviewed in 3 to 5 years' to assess its continuing alignment with the IGIF.

21. These conclusions and recommendation were endorsed by the Working Group at its meeting on 24 June 2020, and thereafter was submitted to the Secretariat as part of the global consultation response on the IGIF. The report detailing the comparative analysis undertaken is provided as a background document to this present report.

III. Increasing awareness of disaster risk management and geospatial information

Conferences and webinars

22. In an effort to build capacity and strengthen knowledge-sharing and technology transfer, the Working Group, in collaboration with the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan (GSI), the Regional Committee of UN-GGIM for Asia and the Pacific (UN-GGIM-AP), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had planned to convene the UN-GGIM WG-Disasters Conference 2020 in Tokyo, Japan, from 25 to 27 February 2020. The focus of the conference was how geospatial information and related technologies are utilized to share disaster related information and disaster risk information. The conference schedule consisted of four sessions and an exercise. While over 100 participants, including more than 30 representatives of Member States and international organizations, were expected to participate, a decision was taken to postpone the conference on 21 February 2020 given the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 Response

23. In March 2020 the COVID-19 outbreak was classified as a pandemic. This global health crisis provided a unique opportunity for the Working Group to not only promote the use of geospatial information to support decision-making at all levels of disaster risk management, but also to forge collaborations with other bodies within the UN System towards promoting and showcasing the use of geospatial information and services in various regions. The Working Group partnered with UN-GGIM: Americas and its partners, and the Government of Jamaica to support the staging of two COVID-19 webinars.

24. The Working Group was invited by UN-GGIM: Americas to participate in the 'UN-GGIM Virtual Geospatial Summit on COVID-19' on 8 April 2020. The Summit was a nine hour collaborative webinar designed, planned and staged by UN-GGIM: Americas, the Urban and Regional Information Systems Association Caribbean Chapter, and the World Geospatial Industry Council (WGIC) and other partners. The Virtual Geospatial Summit featured the theme 'GIS Response to COVID-19' and comprised five segments focused on: GIS data to support response to COVID-19; the use of satellite imagery in assessing and combatting COVID-19; geospatial tools and dashboards; community engagement and feedback; and data sharing amidst crisis. A total of 21 speakers successfully delivered and shared a rich, inspiring, and informative technical contribution of knowledge on geospatial data, tools, methodologies, processes and strategies employed to respond to and manage the pandemic using good cases from across the world. The presentations are available on the [UN-GGIM Americas and UN-GGIM Working Group Disasters web sites](#).

25. The Working Group substantively contributed to the planning and execution of the Virtual Geospatial Summit. The co-Chair from Jamaica delivered welcome remarks on behalf of the Working Group during the opening ceremony, moderated and served as rapporteur for several segments, and also assisted with the preparation of the Summit report and evaluation. Working Group members from UNESCAP and Milan Polytechnic University, as the UN-GGIM Academic Network, delivered presentations during the 'GIS

data to support response to COVID-19' segment. In addition, MapAction delivered a presentation during the 'Community engagement and feedback' segment.

26. Approximately 1,200 participants were engaged throughout the nine hours of the Summit. Some main takeaways from the Summit were that, the availability and accessibility of quality fundamental geospatial data, in particular health data, are critical for supporting the response to and management of the pandemic. Collaboration, coordination and cooperation among governments at the national and local levels, across sectors (health, emergency response, police, transportation, etc.), the private sector and academia proved to be critical driving forces in being able to create the dashboards, the predictive models and generating solutions needed to reduce the spread and manage recovery efforts. It was also noted that existing collaborative and inter-institutional geospatial arrangements is a key ingredient for enabling rapid data sharing and application development.

27. The Working Group collaborated with Jamaica's Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, National Spatial Data Management Branch and Land Information Council of Jamaica, to host the first Jamaica Virtual COVID-19 Geospatial Forum on 28 May 2020, under the theme 'Mapping COVID-19 in the Caribbean - Opportunities for the Future'. The Forum comprised five sessions focused on geospatial tools and technologies, regional responses to COVID-19, sectoral and country perspectives on COVID-19, and its impact and future plans. The Working Group's co-Chair from Jamaica moderated segments of the event and also made presentations on the America's Regional Response to COVID-19 and the Jamaican perspectives on COVID-19 impact and future plans session. Working Group members from the Geospatial Information Authority of Japan and the Milan Polytechnic University, Italy and the UN-GGIM Academic Network also made presentations. [A shared folder contains the presentations delivered and other documents for the forum.](#)

28. Over 930 participants, three speakers and 19 presenters from nine countries contributed to and participated in the rich exchange and success of the forum. Results from the Forum evaluation survey indicated that the event was very successful. The video of the webinar is available here: <https://bit.ly/2ZK7Fct>.

29. UNECA, UNECLAC and UNESCAP, and each related UN-GGIM Regional Committee for Africa, the Americas, and Asia and the Pacific respectively, with the support of the Secretariat in New York and technical partners, organized and hosted three virtual seminars on COVID-19 strategies for a geospatial response, during May 2020. The three events successfully raised awareness and recommended that the Working Group continue working in this area. It is expected that the outcomes of the seminars will contribute to identify solutions readily available and focused on the value-added services geospatial information technology can provide now and in the future to communities. Presentations and reports for the three virtual seminars are available online. For Africa [a shared folder contains the presentations and other documents](#) of the COVID-19 webinar held on 13 May 2020; for the Americas the webinar, [COVID-19: Strategies for a geospatial response in the Americas](#), was held on 15 May 2020; and for Asia and the Pacific the webinar [Strengthening Regional Cooperation in Geospatial Data Sharing for Mitigation of COVID-19 Pandemic](#), was held on 15 May 2020. The webinar aimed to highlight good practices and lessons learned from countries in the Asia Pacific region, and consider how countries and regional organizations can strengthen collaboration to develop capacity to map health risk hotspots and mitigate potential risks using geospatial information and big data. The video of the webinar is available here: <https://bit.ly/3e2gz8A>.

30. The Working Group thanks its members for the invaluable work that has been expended in the development and use of various geospatial information and services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and for taking the time to share their efforts, lessons learnt and their successes to the international community via these geospatial summits and forums. These efforts have significantly increased awareness of geospatial information in disaster risk

management. Members of the Working Group are encouraged to leverage the power of geospatial data, tools and services in facilitating disaster risk management and in particular COVID-19 recovery and mitigation measures.

Collaboration with other bodies

31. Further to decision 9/109, which called for linkages to other international initiatives and actors in disaster risk reduction and management, the Working Group has initiated discussions with UN-GGIM: Americas' Working Group on Disasters and the Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) Working Group on Disasters.

32. **UN-GGIM: Americas' Secretariat and its Working Group on Disasters:** Dialogue has started regarding possible collaboration towards strengthening the efforts of both bodies to implement mutual mandates on disaster risk management. A meeting was convened on 10 July 2020 to initiate this activity. At this meeting discussions centred on strengthening regional to global collaboration, increasing awareness about the Strategic Framework and the alignment of the Framework with the IGIF, and ensuring non-duplication of effort among disaster risk management bodies in the Americas. Also addressed was the joint hosting of a webinar with UN-GGIM: Americas and UNECLAC on the Implementation of the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters in the Americas to be held on 4 August 2020. The Working Group will make presentations on the Strategic Framework and the Assessment Survey, in addition to their implementation, challenges and successes experienced by Member States.

33. Significant effort will be made to encourage Member States within the Americas to complete the Assessment Survey given the currently low submissions from this region. The results from the Survey will guide the implementation of the Strategic Framework within the Americas region. The Working Group will replicate this approach in the future with the hosting of other webinars, in collaboration with the other UN-GGIM Regional Committees in order to increase completion of the Assessment Survey and encourage efforts towards the implementation of the Strategic Framework.

34. **The Committee on Earth Observation Satellites (CEOS) Working Group on Disasters:** Initial introductions have been made and a meeting was convened on 9 July 2020 at which discussions on possible joint initiatives with CEOS WG-Disasters to support Member States in the use of space-based geospatial information for disaster risk reduction and resilience were held. Representatives of both Working Groups made presentations that shared their mandates, objectives and areas of work. The development of scenario-based exercises, which is being led by task group B, was identified as an initial area for joint work between the Groups. In addition, the possible pursuit of joint capacity-building initiatives, and the potential joint hosting of a side event, either pre or post the tenth session of the Committee of Experts, were discussed. Future discussions are to be held to identify other possible collaborations. It is anticipated that the collaborative initiatives will form components of the Working Group's updated work plan that is currently being prepared.

IV. Considerations going forward

35. Acknowledging the fundamental importance of geospatial data and services in support of the current COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the challenges to be identified from the Assessment Survey and responses to pre COVID-19 webinar surveys conducted by the UN-GGIM Regional Committees for Africa, the Americas and Asia and the Pacific, the Working Group has embarked on the preparation of an updated work plan that will include future and existing work items. The objective is to have the work plan presented at the next annual meeting of the UN-GGIM Bureau, and formally presented to the Committee of Experts at its eleventh session in 2021 for endorsement.

36. A major area of work to be pursued by the Working Group is stimulating public awareness, increasing sensitization and communication initiatives, including collaborations to convene forums that will showcase the relevance and applicability of the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters, and encourage Member States to have it implemented. Practical strategies to pursue its implementation and monitoring will be of primary focus, in addition to considering in detail how the IGIF Implementation Guide can be used to raise awareness and promote and monitor the uptake of appropriate priority actions outlined within the Strategic Framework.

37. The Working Group acknowledges its mandate, recognizes that there are many organizations undertaking disaster risk management activities, and the need to avoid duplication of effort. There is therefore a need to identify these organizations and maintain a register of them and their activities. Further, the Working Group calls upon regional and global organizations within the United Nations System, NGO's, the private sector and academia to pursue collaborative and partnership initiatives to support Member States in using geospatial data and services for disasters, including their COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Leveraging the use of geospatial data, tools and services is even more critical as many countries are still grappling with the continued detection, prediction and impact analysis on the spread of the virus. Continued collaborations, awareness raising, sharing and exchange of geospatial data policies, standards, methods, models and good practices will be needed to assist governments as they reopen their borders and implement social and economic recovery measures.

38. Central to the Working Group achieving its objectives is the active contribution and support of its members. Given the scope of work and relevance of disaster risk management to daily lives and to a country's economic prosperity, the membership is comprised of a broad cross section of experts from Member States' geospatial, risk reduction and statistical communities, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector. The membership records indicate that there are 19 Member States, six international organizations, six from academia, two private sector companies and eight from the United Nations System. The co-Chairs note however, that increasingly Member States representation at the Working Group's virtual meetings range on average from seven to eight, with continued poor representation from the regions of Africa and the Arab States.

39. The Committee of Experts is an intergovernmental body, and two of its overarching core principles are to support Member States with setting the direction for the production, availability and application of geospatial information to address key global challenges and to encourage balanced geographic representation, leaving no one behind. In keeping with these principles, the Working Group requests Member States who are currently members to actively contribute to the Group's work programme, and to also forge working relations with their national disaster risk management organizations where this is not currently the case. Other Member States are invited to become members of the Working Group, to contribute to raising awareness on the need for geospatial data in support of disasters, to support the development and promotion of common standards, protocols and processes for improving data quality and interoperability, and to promote the development and implementation of related policies.

V. Points for discussion

40. **The Committee of Experts is invited to:**

- (a) **Take note of the present report and work undertaken by the Working Group during the reporting period, and express its views and provide guidance on the continued efforts to implement the Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters, particularly given that the COVID-19**

pandemic provides a unique opportunity for monitoring and tracking each country's progress across the five priorities for action of the Strategic Framework;

(b) Take note of the recognized alignment of the Strategic Framework with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) as per the detailed assessment conducted by the Working Group;

(c) Endorse the revised Terms of Reference that will guide the operations of the Working Group; and

(d) Encourage Member States to become members of the Working Group and actively contribute to the mandate of expanding the use of geospatial information and services for disaster response initiatives.

ANNEX I

Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters (WG-Disasters)

Draft Terms of Reference

1. Background

- 1.1. The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) at its fifth session in August 2015 strongly welcomed the study entitled “[Improving Geospatial Information Policy, Processes and Services to support Emergency Responses](#)” and acknowledged that the Committee was well placed to raise the awareness of Member States on the need for geospatial data in support of disasters, to support the development and promotion of common standards, protocols and processes for improving data quality and interoperability, and to promote the development and implementation of related policies. In addition, the Committee under decision 5/110 supported the proposal to establish a Working Group to further develop and implement a strategic framework that would be:
- (i) Focused in a practical manner;
 - (ii) Aligned with the outcome and follow-up to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and its implementation;
 - (iii) Able to take into consideration the special needs of developing countries, especially with respect to capacity building and knowledge sharing and;
 - (iv) Broadly representative of different regions of the world and taking into account regional experiences.
- 1.2. [The Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters](#) was prepared by the WG-Disasters on a participatory basis over a period of two years. It is a UN-GGIM guiding policy document to be used by countries to assist them in preventing and reducing the impact of disasters using geospatial information. The Strategic Framework was adopted by the Committee of Experts at its seventh sitting in August 2017 and subsequently by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 2 July 2018 under resolution 2018/14. The Working Group noted in its report [E/C.20/2020/12/Add.1](#) to the Committee of Experts at its ninth session that its objectives as set out in its [Terms of Reference of 2015](#) have been achieved, therefore its initial work has been completed and proposed other potential areas of future work.
- 1.3. The Committee of Experts at its ninth session in August 2019 under decision 9/109 noted seven suggestions for the Working Group to consider in its future work. These suggestions constitute the activities outlined in this Terms of Reference which shall guide the Working Group in the next two years.

2. Vision of the Working Group

Accurate, timely and reliable geospatial information and services are available, in a coordinated way, to decision makers and operational leads prior to, during and post disasters.

3. Objective

- 3.1 Provide a forum for dialogue and coordination among Member States, their relevant government bodies, the United Nations system, international disaster risk and emergency response organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs), private sector bodies, academia, other international organizations and experts, and donors with responsibility for disaster risk reduction and management.

- 3.2 Improve the availability, accessibility, and timeliness of good quality geospatial information for disaster risk management by encouraging policies to promote open access to data and reducing data security concerns at all phases of disaster risk management, at all levels of government and towards the successful achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 3.3 Encourage greater coordination and collaboration on geospatial information activities for disaster risk management with the regional committees and thematic networks of UN-GGIM, the UN regional commissions, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the UN Institute for Training and Research's Operational Satellite Application Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT), the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), and the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC).

4. Functions

- 4.1 The functions of the Working Group will be to:
- i) Implement, monitor and raise awareness of the Strategic Framework for Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters;
 - ii) Design and prepare scenario-based exercises on different hazards;
 - iii) Provide support to the UN Statistical Commission to advance its programme of work regarding disaster-related statistics;
 - iv) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of level of risk and disaster response readiness of Member States by providing a common platform among Member States and their relevant government bodies;
 - v) Encourage Member States to ensure the accessibility and capacity of geospatial information and services in times of disasters;
 - vi) Motivate Member States to improve regional and international collaboration on disaster-related geospatial information matters and;
 - vii) Align its work with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework.

5. Membership, Composition and Term of Office

- 5.1 The Working Group will comprise expert representatives nominated by Member States from their geospatial, risk reduction and statistical communities, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and the private sector. The Working Group will also invite subject matter experts from relevant bodies within the United Nations System such as the Secretariats of Regional Committees of UN-GGIM, UNDRR, UN-SPIDER and UNITAR-UNOSAT.
- 5.2 The Working Group will select two members as Co-Chairs and any other position as deemed necessary to support the work of the Group. The Co-Chairs will serve for two (2) year terms and should the work continue beyond two (2) years, the Working Group may extend the term of present Co-Chairs or elect new Co-Chairs for another two (2) years.
- 5.3 The Working Group will liaise, as required, with international organizations and invite their nominated experts as observers that have an interest in disaster-related geospatial information and services.

6. Groupings

- 6.1 Should the need arise, the Working Group may establish task groups or any other grouping to work on particular aspects of its work programme. All task groups will have a team leader, a name, objectives, defined deliverables, milestones and a fixed life span. Determining the names of the task groups should be led by the Co-Chairs and consensus obtained from the members of the WG-Disasters.
- 6.2 The task group leaders will manage the activities and membership of their assigned task group, in addition to providing reports to the Co-Chairs and the WG-Disasters.
- 6.3 The Co-Chairs will coordinate, monitor and report on the achievements of task groups.

7. Governance

- 7.1 The Working Group will report to the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management at its annual session and this will include the preparation of written reports and background documents as needed.
- 7.2 The UN-GGIM Bureau may review and evaluate the work of the Working Group from time to time, may propose revision of the terms of reference based on the work the Working Group has completed, and any new items that UN-GGIM would like the Working Group to consider.

8. Meetings

- 8.1 The Working Group will operate virtually and meet in person when the opportunity arises in concurrence with related UN-GGIM events and other relevant international events.
- 8.2 The Working Group will operate primarily through online collaboration tools (e.g., email, virtual meetings and document sharing systems, among others)
- 8.3 Decisions of the Working Group will be made by consensus.

9. Secretariat

- 9.1 The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Geospatial Information Section (UNGIS), Office of Information and Communications Technology, Department of Operational Support being Co-Secretariat for the Committee of Experts will serve as the permanent Secretariat of the Working Group. It will provide the day-to-day management and coordination when necessary and undertake internal and external communication on behalf of the Working Group.
- 9.2 In co-operation with the Co-Chairs, the Secretariat will coordinate and assist with the organization and preparation of the agenda and minutes for the meetings of the Working Group, issue notices and any other support activities deemed necessary.

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