



United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Concept Note to Establish a Working Group on Legal and Policy Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management

Background

The Report of the Secretary-General on the Inventory of Issues to be addressed by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) was considered at its Second Session (August 2012) and UN-GGIM recognised policy and legal frameworks for geospatial information as one of the issues that needed to be addressed.

ECOSOC adopted resolution 2016/27 in July 2016 entitled “Strengthening institutional arrangements on geospatial information management”. The resolution acknowledges the considerable achievements and progress made by UN-GGIM over the past five years in the field of geospatial information management, and that UN-GGIM is well placed to continue to contribute to the work of the United Nations, especially in the context of assisting Member States to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the New Urban Agenda.

The Committee of Experts, as the peak intergovernmental mechanism, seeks to play the lead role in setting the agenda for global geospatial information management and to promote its usefulness to address key global challenges and sustainable development. UN-GGIM being the forum to liaise and coordinate among Member States, and between Member States, international organizations and stakeholders should foster better coordination and coherence in geospatial information management by coordinating policy and legal frameworks for geospatial information management, as mandated under ECOSOC Resolution 2016/27.

The availability and accessibility of high-quality, timely and reliable geospatial information is critical for the sustainable national development and follow-up and reviews of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This will require an effective geospatial data infrastructure that serves as the basis for managing all information geographically. There is thus a need to foster an enabling vibrant environment where progressive policies and regulatory regimes cater, support and improve a data ecosystem that is integrative, leverages on globally accepted frameworks, promotes innovations and provides for the best and highest application of geospatial information in all situations.

Rationale

Since the Fifth Session (August 2015), UN-GGIM continued to note developments in geospatial technology that could have an impact on policy and legal frameworks supporting geospatial information management. For example, UN-GGIM realized that new disruptive technologies, such as unmanned aircraft systems, autonomous vehicles collected and used geospatial information in ways that presented unique legal and policy challenges. UN-GGIM also recognized that the geospatial community needed to be more proactively engaged with the legal and policy communities on issues relating to the collection, use, provenance and accessibility of data, such as privacy, licensing, quality and national security. Specifically, UN-GGIM recognized the growing need for geospatial professionals to understand the legislative and regulatory processes and their implications for the entire geospatial community, and for the legal profession and legislators to understand the wider use and benefits of geospatial information.

The Committee of Experts agreed to an international forum on legal and policy issues and frameworks. This international forum was hosted by the Government of Malaysia through its Department of Survey and Mapping in Kuala Lumpur in October 2016.

The UN-GGIM International Forum on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information provided the unique forum for a very informed dialogue and discussions that fostered better understanding of the policy, legislative and legal processes and implications pertaining to the availability and accessibility of geospatial information. Speakers and participants were diverse, from the geospatial information, legal, policy and regulatory communities and included those from the public sector, the private sector and academia.

There were agreement on the growing need for geospatial practitioners to understand the policy, legal and regulatory processes and their implications. Similarly, the legal practitioners and regulators also need to understand the broader usefulness and benefits of geospatial information. All agreed that there is an urgent need for proactive and sustainable data ecosystems to support and inform sustainable development at all levels.

The Forum considerably raised awareness and recognised that –

- ❑ Significant policy and legal challenges associated with geospatial information management include the quality, timeliness, comparability, authority, availability, accessibility, licensing, pricing, sharing, liability, privacy and security of data, and open data.
- ❑ Policy and legal issues impact geospatial information management at the local, national and international levels; and that these must be considered and balanced within national strategies, policies, laws and contexts;
- ❑ Developments and innovations in geospatial information and its related technologies and techniques are rapidly changing societal access to information, requiring the urgent need for geospatial professionals to actively engage with the policy, legal and regulatory communities to create enabling environment where geospatial information can further inform and support economic and sustainable development;
- ❑ Policy and legal frameworks will evolve over time, respond to societal progress and technological developments, particularly as machine-learning environments become more prominent; and in order for such legal and policy frameworks to be effective they must allow for progressive and forward-looking strategies and include principles, guidelines and internationally agreed standards; and

The outcome of all these discussions and debates were reflected in the *Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information*. The Declaration was unanimously adopted by the participants, and by the Fifth Plenary Meeting of the Regional Committee of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific (UN-GGIM-AP). The resolution of Fifth Plenary Meeting of UN-GGIM-AP provided a path forward for the Committee of Experts and the global geospatial information community.

UN-GGIM at its Seventh Session was called to -

- ❑ Consider establishing a working group to explore policy and legal frameworks for geospatial information, with participants from both the geospatial and legal communities;
- ❑ Develop a strategy and plan of action on policy and legal issues in order to begin the advocacy and engagement process, inclusive of a guide to the licensing and dissemination of geospatial information that can provide guidance to Member States; and
- ❑ Contribute to developing capacity within the Member States on the policy and legal issues that impact the collection, use, storage and dissemination of geospatial information.

The establishment of Working Group will ensure that that the global geospatial community will be proactively engaged with policy and legal issues relating to the collection, use, privacy, provenance and, accessibility of data, as well as issues related to the use of unmanned aircraft systems, sensors and scanners and other potentially intrusive devices, and the production and consumption of location-based information in emerging applications such as autonomous vehicles. Policy and legal frameworks in geospatial information management will be an integral component of global geospatial information management that supports the availability and accessibility of comprehensive location-based information in helping Governments develop strategic priorities, make decisions, and measure and monitor outcomes, recognizing that once these data are created, they can be used many times to support a multiplicity of purposes.

Proposed Objectives

The proposed UN-GGIM Working Group on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management seeks to -

- (a) Play a leading role in raising awareness and highlighting the importance of sound policy and legal framework for geospatial information management at the highest levels in order to promote development, innovation, production consumption, distribution of geospatial information in the midst of rapidly changing societal norms towards access to Big Data and other types of information;
- (b) Explore appropriate policy and legal frameworks for geospatial information management proactively, taking into consideration that good policy and legal frameworks will evolve over time, and respond to societal progress and technological developments; and
- (c) Support the Committee of Experts in the development of norms, principles and guides, including any regional capacity development initiatives, to significantly increase the availability and accessibility of geospatial information so as to create high-quality, timely and reliable products and services from geospatial information to address the Sustainable Development goals and other critical local, national, regional and international issues. .

Proposed Functions

The Working Group aims to provide a forum for dialogue and coordination between member states, United Nations System, and other international organisations and experts with a view to –

- i) Encourage enhanced global cooperation in addressing policy and legal issues in geospatial information management;

- ii) Develop strategy and work programs to begin advocacy and engagement processes on policy and legal issues among relevant parties;
- iii) Engage issues relating to the collection, use, privacy, provenance and accessibility of data, including issues related to the use of unmanned systems, smart cities and potentially intrusive sensors and devices;
- iv) Consider and provide guidance on potential policy and legal implications associated with delivering timely and reliable geospatial data that is required to be nationally disaggregated by a number of metrics including, income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics in support of national development priorities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- v) Consider and develop mechanisms to enable effective and efficient governance, sharing and application of geospatial information and the integration of geospatial information with other information and from volunteered sources towards a national integrative information system for the accomplishment of national development aspirations as well as common goals for sustainable development regionally and globally; and
- vi) Develop and provide guidance on sound policy and legal frameworks for geospatial information management including initially, working on issues for the licensing of geospatial information to promote data availability and data sharing.

Summary

The Seventh Session of UN-GGIM requested to consider the establishment of a Working Group on Policy and Legal Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management. The proposed term of reference for the proposed Working Group is annexed.



United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Legal and Policy Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management

1. Mandate

- 1.1 The establishment of the UN-GGIM Working Group on Legal and Policy Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management will be considered by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) at its Seventh Session in August 2017.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Working Group are to:

- 2.1 Play a leading role in raising awareness and highlighting the importance of sound policy and legal framework for geospatial information management at the highest levels in order to promote development, innovation, production consumption, distribution of geospatial information in the midst of rapidly changing societal norms towards access to Big Data and other types of information;
- 2.2 Explore appropriate policy and legal frameworks for geospatial information management proactively, taking into consideration that good policy and legal frameworks will evolve over time, and respond to societal progress and technological developments; and
- 2.3 Support the Committee of Experts in the development of norms, principles and guides, including any regional capacity development initiatives, to significantly increase the availability and accessibility of geospatial information so as to create high-quality, timely and reliable products and services from geospatial information to address the Sustainable Development goals and other critical local, national, regional and international issues.

3. Functions

The functions of the Working Group will be to:

- 3.1 Provide a forum for dialogue and coordination between member states, United Nations System, and relevant stakeholders with a view to –
 - i) Encourage enhanced global cooperation in addressing policy and legal issues in geospatial information management;
 - ii) Engage issues relating to the collection, use, privacy, provenance and accessibility of data, including issues related to the use of unmanned systems, smart cities and potentially intrusive sensors and devices;
 - iii) Consider and provide guidance on potential policy and legal implications associated with delivering timely and reliable geospatial data that is required to be nationally disaggregated by a number of metrics including, income, gender, age, race, ethnicity,

migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics in support of national development priorities and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

- iv) Consider and develop mechanisms to enable effective and efficient governance, sharing and application of geospatial information and the integration of geospatial information with other information and from volunteered sources towards a national integrative information system for the accomplishment of national development aspirations as well as common goals for sustainable development regionally and globally;
 - v) Develop and provide guidance on sound policy and legal frameworks for geospatial information management including initially, working on issues for the licensing of geospatial information to promote data availability and data sharing; and
 - vi) Develop guidance and support any regional capacity development initiatives related to policy and legal framework for geospatial information management.
- 3.2 A key undertaking is to develop and implement a strategy for advocacy and engagement processes on policy and legal issues among relevant parties; and
- 3.3 Propose work programs, informed by broad global consultation, to address the main area of focus identified by Member States while ensuring that there are no overlaps or duplication of initiatives.

4. Membership, Composition and Term of Office

- 4.1 The Working Group will comprise representatives nominated by Member States from their geospatial, statistical and legal communities who are knowledgeable and experienced in the work of the Group. To ensure broad expertise and effectiveness, subject matter experts from the United Nations System, international organisation and the wider legal and information technology communities should be drawn into the Group.
- 4.2 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) years and should the work continue beyond two (2) years, the Working Group may retain existing co-Chairs or elect new co-Chairs for another two (2) years. In normal circumstances, co-Chairs should not serve more than two consecutive two (2) year terms.
- 4.3 Should the need arise, the Working Group may establish sub-groups or task teams to work on particular aspects of its work programme. All sub-groups or task teams must have defined deliverables, delivery milestones and are established with a fixed duration. All sub-groups or task teams must bring its task to a satisfactory conclusion no later than the annual session of the Committee of Experts.
- 4.4 The Working Group will liaise, as required, with international organisations that have an interest in policy and legal matters in geospatial information management and invite their nominated experts as observers.

5. Reporting Procedure

- 5.1 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 from time to time.

6. Frequency of Meetings

- 6.1 The Working Group will operate virtually and meet when the opportunity arises in concurrence with related UN-GGIM events.

7. Governance

- 7.1 The UN-GGIM Bureau may review and evaluate the work of the Working Group from time to time, may propose to UN-GGIM revision of the terms of reference based on the accomplishments of the Working Group and any new items that UN-GGIM would like the Working Group to address.

8. Secretariat

- 8.1 The United Nations Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 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.
- 8.2 The co-Chairs will coordinate, monitor and report on the activities of any sub-group or task teams to the UN-GGIM Bureau and the Secretariat.
- 8.3 In co-operation with the co-Chairs, the Secretariat will coordinate and assist with the organisation and preparation of the agenda for the meetings of the Working Group, issue notices and any other support activities deemed necessary.

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