
Economic and Social Council

20 July 2018

Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

Eighth session

New York, 1-3 August 2018

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Trends in national institutional arrangements in global geospatial information management

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report of the Working Group on Trends in National Institutional Arrangements for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its seventh session, held in New York from 2 to 4 August 2017, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 7/105, in which it welcomed the comprehensive report of the Working Group on Trends in National Institutional Arrangements and the production of the overarching framework for national institutional arrangements, inclusive of instruments, principles and guidelines. In addition, the Committee endorsed the overarching framework as an integrated process for implementing national institutional arrangements in geospatial information management for Member States, commended the compendium of good practices as a tangible means of demonstrating models of institutional arrangements across geographic regions, and encouraged Member States to contribute to that effort. The Committee also agreed that a practical and commendable next step to further the work of the Working Group was to develop an easy-to-understand guide to facilitate the use of the framework principles and instruments by users who were not familiar with geospatial information management concepts. In this report, the Working Group provides information on the review of its modalities and operational activities during the intersessional period, including the appointment of a new Working Group Bureau and the evaluation, refocusing and revision of its work plan.

* E/C.20/2018/1

I. Introduction

1. Since its establishment, the Committee of Experts has recognized that designing and creating robust national geospatial information management institutional structures and arrangements provide a consistent way for governments to direct resources, convey information, comply with requests, deliver outcomes, and successfully accomplish their national and institutional missions. However, despite much progress, the understanding of and need for strong institutional arrangements remains an ongoing gap, as identified by the Committee of Experts.

2. At its third session in July 2013, the Committee of Experts identified the need for Member States to examine institutional arrangements in geospatial information management, and thereby provide their governments with options on how best to create robust national institutional structures and arrangements. The Committee further agreed that there was an urgent need to identify good practices related to national institutional arrangements for geospatial information management. As an outcome of the third session of the Committee of Experts, the Working Group on Trends in National Institutional Arrangements was established with the mandate to identify good practices related to national institutional arrangements for geospatial information management, and to provide governments with options on how best to create national geospatial entities. The Working Group has, over the past four years under the leadership of Spain, produced a body of valuable work in its contribution to informing and supporting national geospatial organizations in their efforts to modernize and/or create robust geospatial institutional structures.

3. In 2017 the Working Group developed a high-level framework for implementing national institutional arrangements in geospatial information management for Member States. This framework ‘National Institutional Arrangements: Instruments, Principles and Guidelines’ consisted of a high-level framework for implementing national institutional arrangements, based on seven structural and six managerial instruments, and fourteen principles. A separate ‘Compendium of good practices for national institutional arrangements’, provided sixty-one good practices that demonstrate how different instruments are being applied within and across Member States in all regions. Member States are encouraged to use and reference these resource documents as a starting point to strengthen the institutionalization of geospatial information management within their respective countries.

4. At its seventh session in August 2017, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 7/105, in which it endorsed the overarching framework as an integrated process for implementing national institutional arrangements in geospatial information management for Member States, and commended the compendium of good practices as a tangible means of demonstrating models of institutional arrangements across geographic regions. The Committee of Experts also agreed that a practical next step of the Working Group was to develop an easy-to-understand guide to facilitate the use of the framework’s principles and instruments by users who were not familiar with geospatial information management concepts.

5. The present report updates the Committee of Experts on the activities undertaken during the intersessional period, which include the review of the Working Group operations, the appointment of a new Working Group Bureau, and the approach to evaluate, refocus and revise its work plan. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the report and to express its views on the proposed plans to refocus and refine the work of the Working Group. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 15.

II. Working Group's operational modalities

6. Up until the seventh session of the Committee of Experts, the Working Group had an established Bureau which consisted of Spain as the Chair; and Spain, Mexico and Singapore as leaders of each of the Task Groups. Following the seventh session and the adoption of the framework, the Task Groups were dissolved and Spain stepped down as Chair of the Working Group. Subsequently Singapore was nominated and elected as Chair of the Working Group.

7. The Working Group was established by decision 3/104 at the third session of the Committee of Experts in July 2013. After almost five years, and with a changing work program, the Working Group is of the view that it is time to review its terms of reference¹. An initial preliminary review of the Working Group's terms of reference reveal that the current tasks need to be refocused, refined and aligned with the interests and national institutional arrangement requirements of Member States. Further, it is noted that the outcome of discussions on the proposed and future work of the Working Group at this eighth session of the Committee of Experts, will also serve as a guide to direct the revision of the terms of reference. The Working Group intends to prepare, during the next intersessional period, a simple and focused terms of reference aligned to its revised work plan.

III. Revision of work plan

8. During the intersessional period, the Working Group took the opportunity to evaluate, refocus and revise its work plan and assessed the need to reallocate resources accordingly given the number of Working Group members and level of support provided. A new work plan for 2018-2019 has been prepared, with one major objective and task, that is scheduled to be completed for presentation to the Committee of Experts at its ninth session in August 2019. This new work plan is implementation focused, in alignment with existing work streams of the Committee of Experts, and features the preparation of the easy-to-understand guide that will be entitled 'Foundational Guide to National Institutional Arrangements Instruments for Geospatial Information Management'. It is expected that this easy-to-understand guide will build upon and facilitate the use of the framework's instruments, principles and guidelines, and the compendium of good practices, by users who are not familiar with geospatial information management concepts.

9. The overarching framework consists of the national institutional arrangements instruments that are specific activities or structures for delivering these institutional arrangements, the principles which are the fundamental beliefs framing and structuring these instruments, and the guidelines that provide directions for implementation of the instruments. These instruments are:

Structural

- S1. Establishment of coordinating functions or entities
- S2. Reshuffling division of competences
- S3. Establishment of a legal framework
- S4. Regulated markets

Managerial

- M1. Strategic planning
- M2. Financial management: input-oriented
- M3. Financial management: performance-oriented
- M4. Financial management: joined up working and cooperation

¹ <http://ggim.un.org/documents/TERMS%20OF%20REFERENCE%20NIA%20.pdf>

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| S5. Systems for information exchange and sharing | M5. Inter-organizational culture and knowledge management |
| S6. Entities for collective decision-making | M6. Capacity building |
| S7. Partnerships | |

10. It is proposed that the easy-to-understand guide will elaborate on each seven structural and six managerial instruments in the context of geospatial information management, and will be presented as three chapters and an annex, as detailed in Annex I.

IV. Next steps

11. The strengthening of national institutional arrangements for efficient and effective geospatial information management remains a critical issue among Member States, particularly developing states and those in special situations. Bearing this in mind the Working Group, in deciding on its next steps, will seek to ensure that its terms of reference and future activities are focused, agile, and reflect the immediate requirements of Member States. To achieve this, the active engagement and participation of Member States will be required. Immediate support is needed to review the Working Group's terms of reference according to the revised work plan, and to contribute to the development of the 'Foundational Guide to National Institutional Arrangements Instruments for Geospatial Information Management' to make it a simple to understand and comprehensive document.

12. The Working Group will seek to engage the participation and contribution from the Committee of Expert's Bureau, its members and relevant expert and working groups through presentations, consultations and discussions at meetings, side events and workshops. The first meeting of the Working Group under the leadership of the new Chair will be convened on 31 July 2018 on the margins of this eighth session of the Committee of Experts, at which time the objectives and future plans of the Group will be presented for consideration. The Working Group may seek to hold a meeting on the margins of the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress in Deqing, China in November 2018 to further address the preparation of the easy-to-understand guide and its work plan for 2019.

13. Previous work undertaken by the Working Group identified that designing and implementing national institutional arrangements is a complex undertaking, and that there is no single universal solution or model that fits all countries. In recognition of this, and the need to support developing countries, in the process of creation, or modernizing their national institutional arrangements for geospatial information management, the Working Group proposes to direct its future efforts towards refining the recommendations for the implementation of national institutional arrangements instruments. This refinement will be applied according to geospatial information management contexts, such as geographic regions (for example Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Caribbean, etc.) and/or to the stages of geospatial information management development, to be more focused and useable. This exercise will consider the national institutional arrangements instruments holistically, in combination and connection with one another, and according to diverse implementation strategies and needs.

14. The Working Group also proposes to develop an assessment framework that could be used to inform and monitor the adoption of recommendations in accordance with the geospatial information management contexts. This work will

need to be considered vis-à-vis the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework; the Compendium on Licensing of Geospatial Information; and outputs from the national institutional arrangements activities being undertaken by the following within the Committee's regional committees: i) UN-GGIM: Africa's Working Group on Institutional Arrangements and Legal Frameworks; ii) UN-GGIM: America's Working Group on Geospatial Data Infrastructure; iii) UN-GGIM: Arab States' Working Group on Institutional Arrangements, Legal, Policy, Awareness and Capacity building; and UN-GGIM-AP's Working Group on Regional Spatial Data Infrastructure.

V. Points for Discussion

15. The Committee of Experts is invited to:

- (a) Take note of the present report and the work carried out by the Working Group, inclusive of the work plan for 2018 - 2019;**
- (b) Express its views on the work plan for 2018 - 2019, which focuses on the preparation of the 'Foundational Guide to National Institutional Arrangements Instruments for Geospatial Information Management'; and**
- (c) Provide guidance on the way forward and future directions of the Working Group.**

ANNEX I

Chapter outline for the ‘Foundational Guide to National Institutional Arrangements Instruments for Geospatial Information Management’

1. Introduction

1.1. Terms and definitions

- (a) Definition of key terms, e.g. National Institutional Arrangements (NIA), instruments, geospatial information management, etc

1.2. Importance of National Institutional Arrangements

- (b) Benefits of NIA for geospatial information management

1.3. Principles for effective National Institutional Arrangements

- (c) Fundamental propositions that frame and structure NIA instruments, with a focus on the critical success factors underlying these instruments

2. Description of each NIA instrument within the context of geospatial information management

2.1 Context and rationale

- (a) Goals of the instrument, e.g. facilitate change culture, build accountability, etc.
- (b) Value of the instrument and associated opportunities for NIA
- (c) Scenarios in which the instrument can be useful, e.g. early stage of geospatial information management development, complex organisational structure, etc.

2.2 Elaboration of instrument supported by examples

- (a) Essential elements and characteristics of the instrument, e.g. development framework with clear objectives, governance structure with well-defined roles and responsibilities, etc.
- (b) Important considerations associated with the instrument, such as success factors, challenges and potential pitfalls

3. Conclusion

Annex with examples illustrating good practices of relevant instruments