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Application of geospatial information related to land administration and management

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Note by the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report of the Expert Group on Land Administration and Management for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its eighth session, held in New York from 1 to 3 August 2018, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 8/109, in which it welcomed the continuing efforts of the Expert Group to advocate and raise awareness of the merits and benefits of effective and efficient land administration and management by formulating overarching policy guidance that could be referenced by Member States. The Expert Group was encouraged to consider the following issues: interoperability and sustainability, the application of geospatial information, the importance of existing internationally agreed standards, historical records, and economic benefits and value. In this present report, the Expert Group provides information on its activities, including its formal meeting on formulating overarching policy guidance and the convening in Deqing, China, on 27 and 28 September 2018, of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management international seminar on effective land administration. Participants in the seminar emphasized the urgent need to record, document and recognize relationships between people and land, in all its forms, recognizing the diverse social and economic circumstances at the national and subnational levels. In that regard, the Expert Group has developed, for the consideration of the Committee of Experts, a framework for effective land administration that is aligned with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework.

* E/C.20/2020/1

I. Introduction

1. At its eighth session, held in New York from 1 to 3 August 2018, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 8/109, in which the Committee welcomed the continuing efforts of the Expert Group to advocate and raise awareness of the merits and benefits of effective and efficient land administration and management by formulating overarching policy guidance that could be referenced by Member States. The Expert Group was encouraged to consider the following issues: interoperability and sustainability, the application of geospatial information, the importance of existing internationally agreed standards, historical records, and economic benefits and value.

2. The Committee of Experts requested the Expert Group to make use of appropriate globally accepted concepts and approaches, such as existing guidelines, best practices and standards, in order to effectively and efficiently link people to land, to record, document and recognize relationships between people and land in all its forms. The Committee additionally welcomed the convening of a formal meeting of the Expert Group in conjunction with an international seminar on effective land administration in Deqing, China, hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources of China.

3. This present report informs the Committee of Experts of the framework for effective land administration, formulated by the Expert Group, and which is aligned with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework. This framework seeks to raise awareness and improve advocacy on the merits and benefits of effective land administration, and provides a reference for Member States when developing, renewing, reforming, strengthening or modernizing land administration and management systems.

4. This present report provides information and updates to the Committee of the Expert Group's progress and activities, including its formal meetings and the international seminar. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the report, consider the framework for effective land administration, and express its views on the Expert Group's activities and progress. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 31.

II. Membership of the Expert Group

5. During this reporting period, India and Tonga (Kingdom of) joined the Expert Group, as well as the International Organization for Standardization Technical Committee 211. The Expert Group is presently composed of expert representatives from 21 Member States, 4 from the UN System and 7 from relevant organizations from the Committee of Experts' stakeholder community.

6. The Expert Group achieved consensus in the selection of the Netherlands and Suriname as co-Chairs. The co-Chairs shall serve a 3-year period from the eighth session, recognizing that item 5.2 of the Terms of Reference of the Expert Group stipulated that the Expert Group will elect two co-Chairs, one from a developing and the other from a developed country, to serve for a 3-year period, renewable once for an additional 3 years. Hence Netherlands is serving its second 3-year period as a co-Chair. The Expert Group expressed its sincere appreciation and thanks to Lesotho as a co-Chair of the Expert Group for the inaugural 3-year period.

III. Meetings and activities

7. The Expert Group organized a side event on the margins of the eighth session of the Committee of Experts to engage delegates from Member States and observers on the importance of strategic partnerships for sustainable and interoperable land administration and management systems. The interactive side event enabled presenters, panellists and participants to consider and discuss the partnerships, key requirements or pillars for sustainable and interoperable land administration and management system, and importantly, efforts needed to efficiently and effectively record, document, and recognize people-to-land relationships in all its forms.

8. The outcome of the side event was for the Expert Group to continue considering key requirements or pillars for sustainable and interoperable land administration and management systems, and to formulate a framework for land administration and management as an overarching policy guidance that can be referenced by Member States towards developing effective and efficient land administration and management systems, and the strengthening and modernizing of existing systems towards greater effectiveness and efficiency.

9. The Expert Group convened its formal meeting over two days on 26 and 29 September 2018 in Deqing, China, hosted by the Ministry of Natural Resources of China, the Zhejiang Provincial Government and the Deqing County Government. The meeting was attended by 27 participants, 21 of whom represented their national agencies coming from 13 Member States and 6 participants from international organizations and the United Nations system.

10. The Secretariat of the Committee of Experts and the Ministry of Natural Resources of China also convened the Deqing International Seminar on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management, with the theme "Effective Land Administration", with the active support and participation of the Expert Group. The international seminar was organized in conjunction with the meeting of the Expert Group on 27 and 28 September 2018. It provided a forum for the Expert Group and participants to engage in a valuable dialogue, deliberate and debate key considerations, priorities, issues, challenges and opportunities on the application of geospatial information for land administration and management, and the need for and benefits of effective and efficient land administration and management for the wellbeing of society, environment and economy.

11. Considering the presentations and discussions at the international seminar and further discussions at the Deqing meeting of the Expert Group, effective land administration caters to all people, and must: i) develop confidence and trust, promote security, safety and peace, and peace building; ii) cater to all circumstances and situations – in times of peace and prosperity, in times of stress and hardships (disaster and conflicts); and iii) promote preparedness and resilience (with increasing climate vulnerabilities).

12. The Expert Group improved its understanding on the role and significance of effective land administration, and its impact on leaving no one behind – the overarching principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Land administration that is effective: i) can accelerate the proportion of adult population with tenure security; ii) promote an efficient and vibrant land market taking into consideration aspects of land values and land development; iii) contribute to smart and resilient societies; and iv) mitigate issues related to land as a cause triggering

migration, both intra- and trans-boundary, and triggering conflict that often leads to violent and protracted conflicts. These are in addition to: a) conferring land rights and providing access to land; b) securing land and property rights; c) land, environmental and resource management; d) access to basic infrastructure and services; and e) supporting equitable and safe housing.

13. The Expert Group understood that effective land administration must be inclusive and accessible, gender and youth sensitive, and consider the vulnerable and marginalized. The enabling environment for effective land administration called for: i) sound and robust legal and policy frameworks; ii) leveraging technologies and innovations, including mobile computing; iii) consider data and information from a wide range of sources, scales and sensors; and iv) harnessing partnerships with civil society, academia, professionals, private sector and philanthropic organizations. There is the need for: a) continual advocacy and awareness across multiple sectors - intra and inter-agency or ministries, across governments, with professionals, industry, investors and the community; b) sound and tested land tools and technical guides; c) open standards; and d) interoperability – of systems, institutions as well as legislative and human interoperability.

14. The Expert Group concluded that the key requirements or pillars for a sustainable and interoperable land administration and management system, and which the Expert Group had considered in the lead up to its Deqing meeting, very importantly, aligned with the nine strategic pathways of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework¹. Therefore, the Expert Group agreed that the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework is the basis and the reference for its formulation of the overarching policy guidance and will elaborate the nine strategic pathways as appropriate to the land sector.

15. The Expert Group was invited to the formal meeting of the Working Group on Legal and Policy Frameworks for Geospatial Information Management held from 17 to 18 November 2018 in Deqing, China. The Expert Group, represented by the co-Chair, was able to discuss and interact with members of the Working Group with regard to the legal and policy issues related to land administration and management. The Expert Group was looking to the Working Group for guidance to achieve legal, policy and institutional cohesion, common implementation of laws and regulations, and the development of good practices, policies and guides as relates to legal and policy vis-à-vis land administration and management. Both the Expert Group and the Working Group shared the desire to advocate the importance of their work and activities, to be kept abreast of respective activities and progress, and to work together towards comprehensive guidance for the development of implementation guidance aligned with the strategic pathways of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework.

16. The Expert Group organized a parallel session with the title “Linking People to Land: The Framework for Effective Land Administration”, at the United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress, held in Deqing, China, from 19 to 21 November 2018. The session allowed the Expert Group to interact and discuss with participants key aspects of effective land administration, including: i) the need for a framework on effective land administration; ii) fit-for-future land administration - unlocking the benefits of sustainable, cost-effective technologies; iii) formalization of informal constructions; and iv) valuation of unregistered lands – a policy guide.

¹ E/C.20/2018/16/Add.1 Annex II as adopted by the Committee of Experts in its Decision 8/113.

17. The co-Chair of the Expert Group attended the eleventh session of the Working Party on Land Administration of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE-WPLA) from 26 to 28 February 2019 in Geneva and presented the Expert Group's consideration of its framework for effective land administration. The co-Chair of the Expert Group also presented on the link between land administration and the Sustainable Development Goals in the session on "Measuring Progress in the Implementation of SDGs". UNECE-WPLA is a member of the Expert Group.

18. Members of the Expert Group contributed to the ongoing development of the Implementation Guide of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework. This included participating in the expert consultations and meetings convened by the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management Section, Statistics Division on the development of the Implementation Guide held in Washington D.C., United States; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Brussels, Belgium; and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Importantly, the Expert Group considers its framework for effective land administration as a specialization of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework for the land sector.

19. The Expert Group has conducted its business principally using email communications, including the development and formulation of the framework for effective land administration. When needed, the Expert Group met online utilizing the Secretariat's WebEx facilities, and in this reporting period, once on 8 May 2019.

IV. Framework for Effective Land Administration

20. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for new data acquisition and integration approaches, including the contribution by Earth observations and geospatial information to leave no one behind. Given that an estimated 70% of humanity do not enjoy secure land and property rights, the Expert Group believes there is a need to accelerate efforts to record, document and recognize people to land relationships in all its forms. The Expert Group considered an overarching policy guidance and formulated the framework for effective land administration to provide a means for raising awareness and improving advocacy, and a reference and guide for Member States when developing, reforming, renewing, strengthening or modernizing land administration and management systems.

21. The Expert Group, after its formal meeting in September 2018, proceeded to elaborate the nine strategic pathways of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework as appropriate to the land sector. The Expert Group also considered the seven underpinning principles and eight goals of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework as it reformulated its earlier pillars for sustainable and interoperable land administration and management system into nine pathways of the framework for effective land administration.

22. A first draft was developed in early November 2018 and subjected to rigorous review by the Expert Group. The Expert Group itemized 281 comments, suggestions and edits in its development and review process. These contributions were invaluable, provided additional context, perspectives and materials into the development and formulation process, and allowed the Expert Group to refine its formulation of the framework, and edit and revise the framework document. Subsequent drafts continued to be reviewed, refined and revised by the Expert Group. At its online meeting on 8 May 2019, the Expert Group agreed to the formulation of the framework with nine pathways that are aligned with the nine strategic pathways

of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, and the structure of the framework document. The formulation of the framework and the framework document was determined after the online meeting of the Expert Group through email communications.

23. In formulating this overarching policy guidance, the Expert Group sought to leverage existing global concepts, approaches, and national geospatial information management systems with its underpinning infrastructure, including its geodetic reference framework and fundamental geospatial data themes, to link people to land, to record, document and recognize people to land relationship in all its forms, and to secure land and property rights for all. This meant referencing the global agenda, policies and guidelines, globally agreed concepts and approaches, and globally developed land tools and methodologies building upon the contemporary notion that all people have the right of access to land, shelter and basic services and that this access is secure.

24. Land administration informs the ‘how’, the ‘what’, the ‘who’, the ‘when’ and the ‘where’ of land tenure, land use, land value, and land development. Land administration is described as the process of determining, recording and disseminating information about the relationship between people and land. Land administration is considered responsible when it continuously aligns processes and resources with the dynamics of societal demands. The term ‘land’ should be interpreted in the broadest sense, also including water bodies (rivers, lakes, seas, oceans) and spaces above and below the surface, that is, air space and subsurface spaces.

25. The Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA) is provided as a background document to this present report. It acts as an overarching policy guide and provides a reference for Member States when developing, renewing, reforming, strengthening or modernizing land administration and management systems. Specifically, the FELA seeks to:

- (a) Implement the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework in the land sector, and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (b) Develop a comprehensive vision for understanding, advocating and promoting effective land administration;
- (c) Provide strategic guidance towards country-specific action plans to be prepared and implemented;
- (d) Advocate the continuous strengthening of land administration and management systems, process, techniques, and tools; and
- (e) Enhance multilateral partnerships through policy convergence in effective land administration with a view to guiding policy development in Member States.

26. The FELA contains six sections: i) executive summary; ii) vision, mission, goals and requirements; iii) background; iv) effective land administration; v) nine pathways of the framework for effective land administration; and vi) conclusions. The nine pathways of the framework for effective land administration as formulated are:

- (a) Governance, institutions and accountability;
- (b) Legal and policy;
- (c) Finance;
- (d) Data;
- (e) Innovation;
- (f) Standards;
- (g) Partnerships;
- (h) Capacity and education; and
- (i) Advocacy and awareness.

27. The Expert Group intends the FELA to be a living document, to be periodically reviewed, updated, and tailored to suit national (or sub-national) circumstances, the changing global context, and evolving political, societal, economic, environmental and technological landscapes.

V. Summary

28. The FELA is intended to serve as a reference by Member States to improve advocacy, promote coherence of concepts, translate concepts, especially existing globally agreed concepts, and approaches towards practical implementation by governments to develop, strengthen and sustain more effective land administration leveraging its nine pathways.

29. The FELA, after due consideration and guidance by the Committee of Experts, should be further refined as appropriate and be subjected to a global consultation process involving Member States and related stakeholders. Thereafter, the FELA, as finalized by the Expert Group, is to be presented to the Committee of Experts for consideration and adoption at its tenth session.

30. The Expert Group recognizes the need for coordination and coherence in operationalizing the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework and to advance integrated geospatial information management globally, including as applies to land administration and management, and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Expert Group agrees to increasing engagement, coordination and collaboration between the Committee of Experts, its Regional Committees, Subcommittee, and Expert and Working Groups.

VI. Points for discussion

31. The Committee of Experts is invited to:

- (a) Take note of the present report on the activities and progress of the Expert Group;**
- (b) Take note and express its views on the development and formulation of the Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA) provided as a background document to this present report; and**

(c) Express its views and provide guidance on the way forward, including a global consultation process involving Member States and related stakeholders, and for the FELA to be presented to the Committee for consideration and adoption at its tenth session.