



Third United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (3UNWGIC)

"Navigating the Next Frontier:

Embracing Digital Renaissance and a New Geospatial Paradigm"

16 – 19 November 2026

Hilton Riyadh Hotel & Residences, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Concept Note

Background

The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), as the secretariat for the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), will convene the **Third United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (3UNWGIC)**. The 3UNWGIC, hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through its General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information (GEOSA), will bring together the global geospatial information community, navigating towards the next frontier, embracing digital renaissance, reimagining humanity's application of integrated geospatial knowledge, information and infrastructure for collective good and foster a future-ready geospatial ecosystem.

The 3UNWGIC will convene under the theme: **"Navigating the Next Frontier: Embracing Digital Renaissance and a New Geospatial Paradigm"** that will serve as a high-level, multi-stakeholder global platform for Member States, international organizations, the private sector, academia, and civil society to strengthen global collaboration, co-create geospatially enabled solutions for global to local impacts.

The convening of the 3UNWGIC arises out of the mandate from the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) to the Committee of Experts – a subsidiary body of ECOSOC – to convene global forums that promote comprehensive dialogue on global geospatial information management with all governments, relevant international organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the private sector. In making Decision 15/101 and 15/116 at its fifteenth session from 6 – 8 August 2025, the Committee of Experts welcomed the offer from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through its General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information to host the Third United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress in Riyadh from 16 – 19 November 2026. The Congress is expected to be an open, participatory and inclusive event with over 1800 participants, aiming to enhance the understanding and inspire applications and actions to usher in a future-ready geospatial ecosystem.

The Congress is the Committee of Expert's flagship event, its global platform that serves as an inclusive and participatory forum for governments, the private sector, academia, civil society, and international organizations to deliberate enhancing global geospatial information management arrangements and to advance toward a geospatial ecosystem where geospatial information, insights and knowledge are effectively applied for global to local impacts.



Overview

The 3UNWGIC is convened at a time when technological advances are moving at unpredictable and unprecedented pace, impacting lives and livelihoods, yet offering opportunities for a very different future. The global geospatial community must prepare and respond in ways that align with this new reality. This technological renaissance also creates and unearths challenges and solutions that require attention, while contributing to efforts that address unease felt by communities and societies. Businesses, academia, government institutions, and civil society are responsible for co-developments and the global to local impacts.

The 3UNWGIC thus positions itself as a watershed moment: a global gathering where the global geospatial community collectively embraces the digital renaissance, reimagining geospatial thinking with creativity, sound governance, and shared purpose, ushering in a new geospatial paradigm that is human-centered, inclusive, responsible, resilient, and transformative.

The theme, *“Navigating the Next Frontier: Embracing Digital Renaissance and a New Geospatial Paradigm”*, reflects the urgency and opportunity for the global geospatial community to go beyond incremental progress and to reimagine the role of geospatial information for the betterment of humanity. It conveys that the digital age is not only transforming technologies and information ecosystems but also inspiring a profound paradigm shift in how humanity applies integrated geospatial knowledge, insights and information for collective well-being.

The 3UNWGIC aims to:

- Embrace a new geospatial paradigm – Reimagine the role of geospatial knowledge as a foundation for people, planet, prosperity, and peace, ensuring it serves as a common good for all.
- Reaffirm the digital renaissance – Explore the transformative potential of emerging and new technologies, and creativity to reshape the governance, production, and use of geospatial information.
- Advance integrated knowledge systems – Promote the fusion of geospatial, statistical, environmental, and socio-economic information as the basis for holistic, evidence-based decisions that leave no one behind.
- Strengthen the global geospatial ecosystem – Accelerate implementation of the globally developed consensus-based geospatial frameworks with the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework as the ‘umbrella’ framework.
- Foster global solidarity and partnerships – Foster collaboration among governments, international organizations, the private sector, academia, and civil society to advance geospatial knowledge in support of inclusive development, digital cooperation, and shared global priorities.
- Chart the next frontier – Define bold yet feasible pathways toward a geospatially enabled digital knowledge era that is future-oriented, humanity-centered, and responsive to the world’s most pressing challenges.

A 3UNWGIC outcome document can be expected. It will be a visionary global statement capturing the paradigm shift, key commitments, and pathways for the next decade of global geospatial information management and its application for the collective good.

Congress Coordination Committee

Given its global scale, importance, and ambition, the overall preparations and conduct of the 3UNWGIC will be strategically and substantively guided by the Congress Coordinating Committee (CCC). The CCC provides strategic oversight to ensure that the 3UNWGIC fulfills its mandate as a truly global, future-oriented, and inclusive global platform. 3UNWGIC is convened under the auspices of the United Nations, the CCC will ensure that the Congress brings together stakeholders at the highest levels to address the emerging possibilities and opportunities for the global geospatial community, with a focus on co-evolving a future-ready geospatial ecosystem.

International Advisory Committee

The International Advisory Committee for the 3UNWGIC will provide substantive guidance and advice on the development and delivery of the 3UNWGIC substantive program. In fulfilling this role, the IAC will ensure that the substantive program is inclusive, representative, attractive, and forward-looking, aligned with the overall objectives of the 3UNWGIC and its theme. As a United Nations convened global forum held once every four years, the 3UNWGIC is a global platform to shape the agenda of the Committee of Experts and to foster meaningful progress on geospatial information management of global relevance.

Dates and Venue

The 3UNWGIC will be held from 16 – 19 November 2026 at the Hilton Riyadh Hotel & Residences, 6623 Eastern Ring Road, Ghirnatah, Riyadh 13241, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The chosen venue will provide state-of-the-art facilities for plenary sessions, thematic tracks, exhibitions, and side events, enabling participants to engage in an immersive, collaborative, and forward-looking experience.

GEOSA, in close coordination with UNSD, will provide appropriate logistical guidance for international participants, including information on visa procedures and entry requirements as well as the range of accommodation available.

Participants

The 3UNWGIC is expected to bring together over 1,800 participants from more than 120 countries, reflecting a globally diverse and participatory geospatial community. Participants will span sectors, regions, and generations, contributing to dynamic and inclusive exchange of knowledge and perspectives. The 3UNWGIC is a premier global platform for high-level engagement between and across governments, international organizations, the private sector, academia, and civil society. With participation expected at ministerial and senior leadership levels, the 3UNWGIC will foster multi-stakeholder dialogue to strengthen global collaboration and advance the geospatial ecosystem.

Participants will include senior government officials and policymakers overseeing geospatial, statistical, and digital governance; national authorities responsible for survey and mapping, land administration, hydrography, and information infrastructure; and representatives from international and regional organizations promoting integrated geospatial information management and development cooperation. The Congress will also bring together leaders from the private sector, including technology companies and service providers driving the digital renaissance; academics and researchers advancing geospatial science and capacity; and civil society actors leveraging geospatial information for social and environmental impact. In addition, the 3UNWGIC is committed to engaging under-represented and emerging professionals to ensure diverse voices and next-generation perspectives are represented.

Visa and Entry

Participants traveling to Saudi Arabia must ensure they meet all entry and visa requirements prior to arrival. Saudi Arabia offers several visa options depending on nationality, purpose of the visit, and duration of stay. Citizens of eligible countries may apply for a tourist e-visa online via the Saudi Unified National Visa Platform. The e-visa typically allows for multiple entries and stays of up to 90 days within a one-year validity period. All travelers must hold a passport valid for at least six months and may be required to present proof of accommodation, return or onward travel, and approved medical insurance. Participants are strongly advised to consult the official platforms for the latest entry requirements, visa regulations and application procedures.

Health, Safety and Insurance

Participants are responsible for ensuring they have received all necessary inoculations and vaccinations prior to travel, in accordance with international health regulations and any specific requirements of the host country. In addition, participants must secure comprehensive insurance coverage for the full duration of their travel and stay. This includes, but is not limited to, health, hospitalization, medical treatment and evacuation, travel, and life insurance. All associated costs and premiums are the sole responsibility of the participants. The organizers do not assume responsibility for any illness, injury, or medical condition that may arise during travel to, from, or during the stay in the host country.

To ensure a safe and healthy meeting environment, all prevailing public health measures and regulations issued by the local government at the time of the 3UNWGIC will apply and must be adhered to by all participants.

(26 August 2025)

