

International Advisory Committee
Third United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress
16 – 19 November 2026
Hilton Riyadh Hotel & Residences, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Terms of Reference

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 (3rd UNWGIC)**. The 3rd UNWGIC, 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 data for collective good and foster a future-ready geospatial information ecosystem.

The 3rd UNWGIC 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 3rd UNWGIC 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 at Hilton 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 information ecosystem.

Congress Coordination Committee (CCC)

Given its global scale, importance, and ambition, the overall preparations and conduct of the 3rd UNWGIC will be strategically and substantively guided by the Congress Coordinating Committee (CCC), co-chaired by the Director of the Statistics Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, and the President of the General Authority for Survey and Geospatial Information of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The CCC provides strategic oversight to ensure that the 3rd UNWGIC fulfills its mandate as a truly global, future-oriented, and inclusive event. Convened under the auspices of the United Nations, the 3rd UNWGIC will bring together stakeholders at the highest levels to address the evolving opportunities and challenges of the global geospatial community, with a focus on co-creating a future-ready geospatial information ecosystem.

Through its leadership, the CCC will guide the 3rd UNWGIC, enabling meaningful dialogue and knowledge exchange to strengthen institutional and human capabilities in integrated geospatial information management; providing the global platform to foster inclusive, cross-sectoral collaboration between governments, industry, academia, and communities; and linking communities across regions and disciplines to share experiences, good practices, and solutions; towards geospatially enabled solutions to humanity's most critical and complex challenges.

Local Organizing Committee (LoC)

Convened by the host, the Local Organizing Committee (LoC) serves as the primary facilitator of all on-the-ground arrangements and operations, coordinating logistics and services in close collaboration with local authorities, partners, and the United Nations to ensure a professional, participatory, and culturally relevant 3rd UNWGIC.

Dates and Venue

The formal 3rd UNWGIC program will span four days, from 16 – 19 November 2026 at the Hilton Riyadh Hotel & Residences. Embedded within the week-long series of events (15 – 19 November) include global and regional meetings, and knowledge-sharing activities and exhibition. It is also expected that the IAC and the UN-GGIM Expanded Bureau will meet in-person during the week in support of the substantive objectives of the 3rd UNWGIC.

International Advisory Committee (IAC)

The International Advisory Committee for the 3rd UNWGIC will provide substantive guidance and advice on the development and delivery of the 3rd UNWGIC 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 3rd UNWGIC and its theme. As a United Nations convened global forum held once every four years, the 3rd UNWGIC is a global platform to shape the agenda of the Committee of Experts and to foster meaningful progress on geospatial information management issues of global relevance.

Reporting to the Congress Coordinating Committee (CCC), the IAC will:

- Identify and shape the overarching substantive program for the 3rd UNWGIC, its sub-themes and overall program structure;
- Co-ordinate with the CCC and the LoC on the content, design, and delivery of the plenary sessions;
- Develop coherent content, design, and delivery of parallel sessions with general alignment with the plenary sessions;
- Recommend high-level speakers, panelists, and moderators for panels and parallel sessions;
- Ensure balanced representation across sectors, regions, genders, and stakeholder groups; and
- Actively promote the 3rd UNWGIC through its networks and communication channels.

Core Responsibilities

- Program Development:
 - Propose and refine focus areas and sub-themes aligned with the 3rd UNWGIC theme.
 - Develop detailed topical clusters and session formats for each focus areas and sub-themes.
 - Coordinate proposals for parallel and technical events within the substantive program.
 - Coordinate with the CCC to ensure coherence of the overall substantive program.
- Speaker and Panel Identification:
 - Recommend high-level speakers, thought leaders, recognized practitioners including from under-represented groups and next generation voices to ensure diverse, inclusive and future-facing content.
 - Review speaker diversity and balance to ensure broad geographic participation, representation and inclusiveness.
- Stakeholder Engagement:
 - Engage respective networks to encourage participation and cross-sectoral collaboration.
 - Promote, communicate and disseminate the 3rd UNWGIC program.
- Quality Assurance and Oversight:
 - Regularly review the evolving program for relevance and coherence.
 - Ensure appropriate balance of perspectives, with emphasis on geospatially enabled solutions for global to local impacts.

Composition

The IAC shall include:

- Members of the UN-GGIM Bureau.
- Chairs (or their representatives) of the five UN-GGIM regional committees.
- Chairs (or their representatives) of the UN-GGIM thematic networks.
- A representative from the host country (a nominee of GEOSA or the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia)
- A member of the IAC of the 2nd UNWGIC from its host country.
- A senior representative from one UN system entity or international organization.
- A few invited global experts (not more than four) from stakeholder groups.

The membership of the IAC shall not exceed twenty and the IAC shall select its chairperson from among its members. The UN-GGIM Secretariat (Statistics Division) will serve as the secretariat of the IAC and provide backstopping services for the overall program of the 3rd UNWGIC. A representative of the host country's local organizing and logistical committee(s) will serve as an ex-officio member to ensure coordination with local organizing and logistical efforts.

Working Modality

- The IAC will work primarily through email correspondence and virtual meetings (Microsoft Teams).
- Regular virtual meetings will be held, expected to be monthly, and more frequently during key planning phases.
- The IAC will report regularly to the Congress Co-ordinating Committee through its Chairperson and secretariat.
- The virtual meetings will be facilitated by a general service staff member from the UN-GGIM Secretariat.

Provisional Timeline (Subject to confirmation by the IAC)

- **September 2025:** Invitations and composition of the IAC finalized.
- **October 2025:** First virtual meeting of the IAC, finalize ToR, working modalities, and initiate program planning.
- **January 2025:** Preliminary program structure with sub-themes finalized.
- **March/April 2026:** Invitations issued to potential speakers, panelists, contributors and moderators
- **June 2026:** Draft program of sessions and speakers ready for review and completion.
- **July 2026:** Substantive program finalized and reported to the sixteenth session.
- **Sixteenth Session:** Final program released and promoted.
- **September 2026:** Overall program finalized.

(This draft Terms of Reference was finalized and adopted at the second meeting of the International Advisory Committee on 6 November 2025.)

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ANNEX 1

An outline summary of the first two United Nations World Geospatial Information Congresses:

First United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress – Deqing, China
(19–21 November 2018)

- Theme: “The Geospatial Way to a Better World”
- Focus:
 - Emphasized the critical role of geospatial data in addressing global challenges like poverty, hunger, climate change, water scarcity, and disease.
 - Explored how geospatial technologies support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by strengthening national geospatial information management systems, driving technological innovation, and fostering international cooperation.
 - Program included plenary sessions on sustainable development, digital economy, building smart societies, and growing international cooperation, alongside special sessions such as the Young Professionals Summit.

Second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress – Hyderabad, India
(10–14 October 2022)

- Theme: “Geo-Enabling the Global Village: No one should be left behind”
- Focus:
 - Built on the first Congress by emphasizing inclusive and equitable access to geospatial information.
 - Highlighted integrated geospatial information management to support sustainable development goals, societal well-being, environmental and climate resilience, and economic vitality.
 - Embraced digital transformation and technological innovation to bridge the gap in access and ensure no communities are overlooked.
 - Included youth-focused events, learning workshops, and sessions engaging under-represented groups, reinforcing global cooperation in geospatial capacity development.