

High-Level Group of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (HLG-IGIF)

Terms of Reference

I. Background

In August 2018 at its eighth session, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), in its decision 8/113, welcomed the formulation of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF) as an important and practical overarching strategic policy and guide for countries to reference when developing and strengthening their national and sub-national geospatial information management systems and capabilities. UN-GGIM supported the approach that the IGIF should serve as a living document, to be further refined as technologies, processes and knowledge evolved, and should comprise three parts as separate, but connected, documents.

In making decision 8/113, UN-GGIM adopted Part 1: Overarching Strategic Framework of the IGIF, as a forward-looking document developed to provide overarching strategic messages in the context of an expansive, integrated national framework, focusing on the policy, perspectives and key elements of geospatial information, and in this regard supported the preparation of an illustrative summary as a high-level reference document aimed at enhancing geospatial awareness for policymakers and decision makers.

In September 2020 at its tenth session, UN-GGIM, in its decision 10/103, adopted Part 2: Implementation Guide of the IGIF, subject to further refinement and finalization, as a means of strengthening national geospatial information management arrangements within and across Member States at the institutional level and supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in developing countries.

At its tenth session, UN-GGIM noted the global significance of the IGIF, which serves as a key umbrella for the many activities under the purview of the Committee of Experts, including the regional committees and thematic groups of UN-GGIM, which could be applied to any country to guide transformational change, and which would be a living and usable document to be reviewed and refined through an iterative process, on the basis of the practical implementation experiences of Member States.

UN-GGIM further encouraged consideration of a programme, in coordination with the regional committees and the regional commissions of the United Nations system, which would leverage the IGIF and its Implementation Guide with a view to strengthening national capacities to effectively manage geospatial resources in order to modernize national geospatial information arrangements in Member States, in particular in developing countries, and to advocate and raise awareness, as appropriate, including in the context of funding entities.

In making decision 12/105 at its twelfth session in August 2022, UN-GGIM reiterated the importance of implementing the IGIF as a forward-looking Framework at the country level, across the programme of work of the Committee of Experts, within priority areas in the workplans of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management regional committees, with interlinkages with other regional-to-global frameworks, and in response to increasingly challenging national, regional and global demands.

The IGIF is now recognized globally among Member States. Resolution 2022/24 entitled ‘Enhancing global geospatial information management arrangements’, adopted by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 22 July 2022, reiterates the importance of strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness of the Committee of Experts, particularly for the achievement of its operations focused on the Sustainable Development Goals and the IGIF, to strengthen and ensure its continued effectiveness and benefits to all Member States.

The IGIF provides the basis and guide for developing, integrating and strengthening national geospatial information management arrangements in Member States, bridging the geospatial digital divide, and supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other global development Agendas. Both developed and developing countries are implementing the IGIF and developing Country-level Action Plans on an optional and voluntary basis, in accordance with the available guidance and tools. This represents a considerable achievement and body of work which needs to be sustained and maintained.

II. Mandate

At its tenth session, in making decision 10/103, UN-GGIM endorsed the establishment of a dedicated high-level group of experts, with balanced geographical representation and expertise, as a mechanism to provide strategic leadership, coordination and oversight in order to ensure the sustained success of the IGIF, and to mobilize the resources necessary to maintain the momentum and refinement of the IGIF as a continuously evolving process.

The first meeting of the High-Level Group of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (HLG-IGIF) was formally constituted in a virtual meeting on 25 February 2021 and provided the opportunity for the Group to confirm its mandate, objectives, role, membership composition and methods of work. This included the election of its inaugural two co-Chairs, and the unanimous adoption of its first Terms of Reference. These present Terms of Reference are an update, with minor revisions, of the February 2021 Terms of Reference.

III. Objective

The HLG-IGIF aims to: provide the strategic leadership, promotion, coordination, planning and oversight to successfully sustain the uptake and implementation of the IGIF; explicitly demonstrate the societal value and impact of the IGIF, and associated progress towards enabling the achievement of the SDGs; provide expertise and advice to assist countries in their implementation of the IGIF at the country level; and mobilize needed resources for implementation and to maintain the momentum and evolving refinement of the IGIF with Member States and other key stakeholders.

IV. Key Functions

Subject to guidance by UN-GGIM, key functions of the HLG-IGIF shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Communicate, promote and grow the importance and relevance of the IGIF and other relevant UN-GGIM frameworks to policy and decision-makers within and outside the global geospatial information community;
2. Engage with and provide guidance on how geospatial information can be communicated and managed at the executive leadership level, and can be elevated in

decision-making roles within and across government to support global to national development agendas and priorities.

3. Provide an enabling environment to discuss strategies and activities for strengthening national capacities to effectively manage geospatial resources in order to modernize national integrated geospatial information arrangements within and across countries and regions;
4. Identify opportunities, including twinning arrangements, to develop reference resources and training materials on the implementation of the IGIF, in order to provide the best possible support for countries, in particular, countries in special situations;
5. Address and advocate for resource mobilization, including in the context of funding entities, to sustain and maintain the momentum and refinement of the IGIF as a continual evolving process; for strengthening capacities to design, develop and implement the IGIF at the country-level; as well as identifying ways to leverage the resources and creativity of academia, international geospatial societies, and the private sector, etc.;
6. Mobilize resources and institutions inside and outside the geospatial information community, understand their needs, and if required, coordinate their actions to serve sustainable development as deemed appropriate, thereby further extending partnerships (i.e. foundations and development organizations); and
7. Review and make recommendations on the IGIF, including revisions and future trends, to UN-GGIM, as appropriate.

V. Governance

The HLG-IGIF shall work under the auspices of UN-GGIM and report directly to the Committee on at least an annual basis. UN-GGIM shall review the work of the HLG-IGIF and may revise these Terms of Reference based on the work the Group has completed and any new items that the Committee would like the Group to consider.

VI. Membership and Composition

The core membership of the HLG-IGIF shall comprise the members of the Bureau of UN-GGIM (4 members) and representatives of Member States, at the highest executive leadership level, from national geospatial information (or related) agencies nominated by the Bureaux of each of the five Regional Committees of UN-GGIM.

Recognizing the importance of expanded and equitable engagement and coordination for the sustainable implementation of the IGIF with and through the Regional Committees of UN-GGIM, membership of the HLG-IGIF shall (optionally) include the Chairs of the Regional Committees of UN-GGIM (5 members).

Regional membership composition shall be as follows: Asia Pacific (4 members); Africa (4 members); America's (4 members); Europe (4 members) and Arab States (2 members). Membership shall be regionally representative and of equal balance between developed and developing countries, and with due consideration being given to countries in special situations where appropriate. Total membership of the HLG-IGIF may comprise up to 27 Member States.

Given the nature of the strategic leadership, coordination and oversight requirements of the HLG-IGIF, membership shall embrace Member States with demonstrated experience in the development and/or implementation of the IGIF during its journey and being willing and able to contribute to advance and sustain, perhaps even to resource, the initiative.

Membership is to be reviewed every two years. The review shall be based on actual participation and contribution from the members as demonstrated through interactions with, and activity reports to, UN-GGIM Regional Committee meetings and associated fora.

A broader group of additional subject matter experts and stakeholders from other relevant organizations and sectors shall be invited to participate as necessary and when needed. The Group may also invite experts, as appropriate, from international organizations, academia, civil society, and the private sector to contribute their expertise and experiences on implementation of the IGIF.

VII. Co-Chairs

The HLG-IGIF shall elect two (2) co-Chairs to serve for 4-year periods, with co-Chair elections occurring biennially, such that one new co-Chair is elected every two years in order to ensure continuity. The co-Chairs shall be selected from the members, other than the UN-GGIM Bureau and Chairs of the Regional Committees of UN-GGIM, as defined in Section VI above such that consideration of the equity between developed and developing countries occurs.

The co-Chairs shall provide leadership and coordination including setting priorities for the full functioning of the HLG-IGIF. After the expiry of their term, former co-Chairs shall be encouraged to provide support to the newly appointed co-Chairs to facilitate continuity.

VIII. Secretariat

UNSD, as the Secretariat of UN-GGIM, shall serve as the permanent Secretariat of the HLG-IGIF. It shall provide the day-to-day management and coordination when necessary; undertake internal and external communication on behalf of the Group; and, support the HLG-IGIF with substantive guidance when appropriate and requested.

In cooperation with the co-Chairs, the Secretariat shall organize and develop the agenda for HLG-IGIF meetings, maintain its web-space, issue notices from the Group and undertake other support activities as deemed necessary.

IX. Methods of Work

The HLG-IGIF shall work through electronic exchanges and regular biannual meetings. Where feasible, a physical meeting of the Group will be conducted in conjunction with the annual session of UN-GGIM. Other topic oriented meetings will be convened when and as needed and with specific tasks to be accomplished.

The HLG-IGIF shall conduct its work in an open, inclusive and transparent manner, and will operate with the assistance of a web-space to facilitate collaboration, knowledge management and information sharing.

Should the need arise, the HLG-IGIF may establish sub-groups or task teams, utilizing the expertise and experiences of Member States and relevant experts, including from Regional Commissions of the United Nations, the UN-GGIM Thematic Networks, the World Bank, and other relevant entities to work on particular aspects of its work. All sub-groups or task teams must have a defined program of work, deliverables, delivery milestones and be established with a fixed duration. Sub-groups or task teams must report progress and delivery of their work to HLG-IGIF or co-Chairs as appropriate.

X. Reporting

The co-Chairs, with support from the Secretariat, shall coordinate, monitor and report on the activities of the HLG-IGIF and any sub-groups or task teams thereof, to UN-GGIM and its Regional Committees. The HLG-IGIF shall formally report on progress of the implementation of the IGIF to the annual sessions of UN-GGIM, through the preparation of written reports and background documents, under the standing agenda item ‘Integrated Geospatial Information Framework’.

XI. Review of the Terms of Reference

In consultation with UN-GGIM, the HLG-IGIF may review these current Terms of Reference as the need arises, to ensure that the Group carries out its functions efficiently and effectively based on its mandate.

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