

---

# Working Group on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters (WG-Disasters)

## Terms of Reference

### 1. Background

- 1.1. The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) at its fifth session in August 2015 strongly welcomed the study entitled “[Improving Geospatial Information Policy, Processes and Services to support Emergency Responses](#)” and acknowledged that the Committee was well placed to raise the awareness of Member States on the need for geospatial data in support of disasters, to support the development and promotion of common standards, protocols and processes for improving data quality and interoperability, and to promote the development and implementation of related policies. In addition, the Committee under decision 5/10 supported the proposal to establish a Working Group to further develop and implement a strategic framework that would be:
  - i) Focused in a practical manner;
  - ii) Aligned with the outcome and follow-up to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and its implementation;
  - iii) Able to take into consideration the special needs of developing countries, especially with respect to capacity building and knowledge sharing and;
  - iv) Broadly representative of different regions of the world and taking into account regional experiences.
- 1.2. [The Strategic Framework on Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters](#) was prepared by the WG-Disasters on a participatory basis over a period of two years. It is a UN-GGIM guiding policy document to be used by countries to assist them in preventing and reducing the impact of disasters using geospatial information. The Strategic Framework was adopted by the Committee of Experts at its seventh sitting in August 2017 and subsequently by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on 2 July 2018 under resolution 2018/14. The Working Group noted in its report [E/C.20/2020/12/Add.1](#) to the Committee of Experts at its ninth session that its objectives as set out in its [Terms of Reference of 2015](#) have been achieved, therefore its initial work has been completed and proposed other potential areas of future work.
- 1.3. The Committee of Experts at its ninth session in August 2019 under decision 9/109 noted seven suggestions for the Working Group to consider in its future work. These suggestions constitute the activities outlined in this Terms of Reference which shall guide the Working Group in the next two years.

### 2. Vision of the Working Group

Accurate, timely and reliable geospatial information and services are available, in a coordinated way, to decision makers and operational leads prior to, during and post disasters.

### 3. Objective

- 3.1 Provide a forum for dialogue and coordination among Member States, their relevant government bodies, the United Nations system, international disaster risk and emergency response organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs), private sector bodies, academia, other international organizations and experts, and donors with responsibility for disaster risk reduction and management.

- 
- 3.2 Improve the availability, accessibility, and timeliness of good quality geospatial information for disaster risk management by encouraging policies to promote open access to data and reducing data security concerns at all phases of disaster risk management, at all levels of government and towards the successful achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 3.3 Encourage greater coordination and collaboration on geospatial information activities for disaster risk management with the regional committees and thematic networks of UN-GGIM, the UN regional commissions, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), the UN Institute for Training and Research's Operational Satellite Application Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT), the United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER), and the Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC).

#### **4. Functions**

4.1 The functions of the Working Group will be to:

- i) Implement, monitor and raise awareness of the Strategic Framework for Geospatial Information and Services for Disasters;
- ii) Design and prepare scenario-based exercises on different hazards;
- iii) Provide support to the UN Statistical Commission to advance its programme of work regarding disaster-related statistics;
- iv) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of level of risk and disaster response readiness of Member States by providing a common platform among Member States and their relevant government bodies;
- v) Encourage Member States to ensure the accessibility and capacity of geospatial information and services in times of disasters;
- vi) Motivate Member States to improve regional and international collaboration on disaster-related geospatial information matters and;
- vii) Align its work with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework.

#### **5. Membership, Composition and Term of Office**

- 5.1 The Working Group will comprise expert representatives nominated by Member States from their geospatial, risk reduction and statistical communities, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, and the private sector. The Working Group will also invite subject matter experts from relevant bodies within the United Nations System such as the Secretariats of Regional Committees of UN-GGIM, UNDRR, UN-SPIDER and UNITAR-UNOSAT.
- 5.2 The Working Group will select two members as Co-Chairs and any other position as deemed necessary to support the work of the Group. The Co-Chairs will serve for two (2) year terms and should the work continue beyond two (2) years, the Working Group may extend the term of present Co-Chairs or elect new Co-Chairs for another two (2) years.
- 5.3 The Working Group will liaise, as required, with international organizations and invite their nominated experts as observers that have an interest in disaster-related geospatial information and services.

---

## **6. Groupings**

- 6.1 Should the need arise, the Working Group may establish task groups or any other grouping to work on particular aspects of its work programme. All task groups will have a team leader, a name, objectives, defined deliverables, milestones and a fixed life span. Determining the names of the task groups should be led by the Co-Chairs and consensus obtained from the members of the WG-Disasters.
- 6.2 The task group leaders will manage the activities and membership of their assigned task group, in addition to providing reports to the Co-Chairs and the WG-Disasters.
- 6.3 The Co-Chairs will coordinate, monitor and report on the achievements of task groups.

## **7. Governance**

- 7.1 The Working Group will report to the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management at its annual session and this will include the preparation of written reports and background documents as needed.
- 7.2 The UN-GGIM Bureau may review and evaluate the work of the Working Group from time to time, may propose revision of the terms of reference based on the work the Working Group has completed, and any new items that UN-GGIM would like the Working Group to consider.

## **8. Meetings**

- 8.1 The Working Group will operate virtually and meet in person when the opportunity arises in concurrence with related UN-GGIM events and other relevant international events.
- 8.2 The Working Group will operate primarily through online collaboration tools (e.g., email, virtual meetings and document sharing systems, among others)
- 8.3 Decisions of the Working Group will be made by consensus.

## **9. Secretariat**

- 9.1 The United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Geospatial Information Section (UNGIS), Office of Information and Communications Technology, Department of Operational Support being Co-Secretariat for the Committee of Experts will serve as the permanent Secretariat of the Working Group. It will provide the day-to-day management and coordination when necessary and undertake internal and external communication on behalf of the Working Group.
- 9.2 In co-operation with the Co-Chairs, the Secretariat will coordinate and assist with the organization and preparation of the agenda and minutes for the meetings of the Working Group, issue notices and any other support activities deemed necessary.