



## Second High Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM)

### Opening Speech

**Dr. Mohammed Ahmed Al a'mer**

**President of Central Informatics Organisation (CIO)**

**Doha, Qatar 4-6 February 2013**

**Your Excellencies, Honorable Ministers, distinguished guests, fellow delegates and participants to the Second High Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM).**

Mr. Chairman, at the onset I would like to say how pleased and honored to be present here by representing the 'Central Informatics Organisation (CIO)', Kingdom of Bahrain, and let me start by expressing my deepest gratitude to the United Nations Statistics Division for inviting me to this event.

I also express my deepest gratitude to the organizing committee and the Government of Qatar, Ministry of Municipality and Urban Planning and Qatar Statistics Authority for hosting this important international forum.

It goes without saying that geospatial industry is growing like never before. Today, geospatial information, technologies, services (GITS) and spatial data infrastructure (SDI) play critical roles in allowing geo-enabling governments, local communities, non-government organizations, the commercial sector, the academic community and common people to make progress in addressing many of the world's most pressing problems.

The industry in its current level of maturity is not very old. However, we witnessed unprecedented growth in both technical and consumer applications of GIS over last few decades. A few years ago we had to solely rely on road signs and maps to find our way. Today who does not have real time map in their handheld phones? The possibilities of technology and particularly GIS frontiers are endless. It also comes with lot of technical and non-technical challenges. Given the economic and social challenges we have in the macro environment, I see the frontiers of GIS technology and its application as great opportunity. Careful planning and systematic adoption and adaptation can emerge as string driver of development. It provides opportunities for new business and employment. It provides greater opportunities for the governments to serve tis citizens and residents better. It helps us handle crises and respond to emergencies in a more effective and efficient manner.

Bahrain, Qatar and our member states in GCC and many of our neighbors have put forward ambitions dreams and aspirations for the country in the form of Vision 2030. I firmly believe that technology including Geospatial technology will be a strong driver and enabler in realizing our national visions and aspirations.

This forum brings together a host of diverse stakeholders from our industry and therefore is testimony to the complementary roles of government, private industry and the academic community present here to play an active role in advancing the industry making it a means to overcoming our challenges of growth and development.

The key objective here is to create a community of practice locally that will address the key elements necessary for effective and reliable information sharing and coordination. There is a need for local communities of practice be supported by international best practices and lessons learned. Forums like this pave way for such learning's and exchange of ideas.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me now brief you on what we have done in Bahrain. Kingdom of Bahrain made great strides in the field of (GIS) with the support of the leadership for the Geographic Information sector which is represented in many ways, mainly the formation of the National GIS Steering Committee (NGISSC) in 24th January 2004, which have already had a deep impact in supporting the work of the ministries and authorities of the Kingdom and related service delivery. The NGISSC developed a strategic plan for geographic information systems and we have overseen its implementation. Among many projects that is concluded one of the recent success is related to the e-Wayleave clearance system. The Kingdom of Bahrain takes pride in being one of the countries that have managed to establish a unified national-level Geographic Information database to support the needs of public, private, education sectors and the citizens and residents.

It is encouraging to note that Bahrain Spatial Data Infrastructure (BSDI) is as an innovative endeavor in conformance to the policies of the Government of Bahrain, in effectively recognizing the significance of spatial information, to the planning, governance of the nation and provision of public services. BSDI provides a base or structure of practices and relationships among data producers and users that facilitate data sharing and use. It is also a set of actions and new ways of accessing, sharing and using geographic data that enables far more comprehensive analysis of data to help decision-makers chose the best course of action. BSDI is considered as a major achievement of the National GIS Steering Committee with leadership being provided by the Central Informatics Organisation, CIO.

Bahrain Spatial Data Infrastructure (BSDI) Portal is a manifestation of Spatial Data Infrastructure initiative to serve and geospatially enable Government Organizations, Private Sectors and Academic Institutions of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Various stakeholders both government and private entities have participated in the BSDI initiative either as Data Custodians or as Data Users. The final data products are then shared through the portal..

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

From the onset of its foundation in the year 2002, the GIS Directorate of CITO has done a great deal of work over the past eleven years in Geo-Enabling Government & Society. Please allow me to highlight some of the important work undertaken.

- Technical Support & GIS applications development.  
(E.g. Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Health, Public Commission for Protection of Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife, etc.).
- Outreach programs.  
(E.g. OGC value workshop).
- Institutional Framework  
(e.g. data sharing policies, data pricing policies, etc.). *Published*
- Technical Standards  
(data format, data exchange, software, metadata, etc.). *Published*
- Fundamental Datasets  
(e.g. geographic datasets, Basic map features, etc.). *Achieved*
- Technical Framework  
(e.g. actual hardware, communication facilities, etc.). *Achieved*
- BSDI Portal. *Established*
- Capacity building.  
(E.g. National training on GIS tools, TeachMe GIS, USA).

As part of our national role, Kingdom of Bahrain represented by CITO has signed several MoU's at the regional with UAE, KSA, and lastly with ESRI. By the same token, the Kingdom represented by Central Informatics and Telecommunications Organization has been selected as an active member in international organizations, such as global spatial data infrastructure (GSDI) and open geospatial consortium (OGC) as a sole representative from the Middle East.

**Distinguished delegates,**

I have described only some of the projects that we have been working together in recent years. We, like any one in the field, are aware of the challenges that face us as we move ahead. The technology is advancing at a never before speed. Real time GIS, 4D, spatial intelligence etc. are fast advancing. To keep pace and to make it of benefit to the stakeholders, we as GIS community must keep pace. As technology advances issues of privacy and security also would become paramount. This is indeed a daunting challenge. We must work building human capacity both for technical and change management. We also will be required to constructively destruct and reconstruct many of our geo assets. As I stand at the forefront of the frontiers of these challenges as the President of CIO, entrusted to develop GIS in Bahrain, I am perceive this as great opportunities for transformation. I look forward to working with you all in co-creating a great and geo enabled future for all of us in Bahrain and in the region.

**Thank you very much.**