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Future trends in geospatial information management

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Report of the Secretariat

Summary

The present paper contains the report which seeks endorsement on the background document 'Future trends in geospatial information management: the five to ten year vision'. This document was prepared by a working group established after the first session of the Committee of Experts, held in October 2011. The working group was tasked with considering technological and substantive advances in geospatial and interrelated information infrastructures and providing a strategic vision to address emerging trends over the next 5 to 10 years. A draft of the background document was presented to the Committee of Experts at its second session, held in August 2012, following a global consultation process and an informal workshop conducted in April 2012 by a visioning group established within the working group. This report summarizes the consultation process and the deliberations undertaken since the second session. The background document provides a detailed analysis of the broad themes and trends identified by the working group, as follows: technology and the future direction of data creation, maintenance and management; legal and policy developments; skills requirements and training mechanisms; the role of the private and non-government sectors; and the future role of Governments in geospatial data provision and management. The document provides important technical information to guide the future work programme of the Committee of Experts and the preparations by Member States of their geospatial information strategies and plans. The Committee of Experts is invited to endorse the background document and to propose a time frame within which it should be revised.

* E/C.20/2013/1

I. Introduction

1. At its first session, held in October 2011, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management discussed the topic of “strategic considerations of technological and substantive advances in geospatial and interrelated information infrastructure”. The Committee recognized that there was a need to document the emerging trends in the geospatial information world over the next 5 to 10 years, and that such trends would help guide the work programme and frame the technical discussion of the Committee of Experts. The Committee established a working group in October 2011, to document the future trends and development in geospatial information management for the Committee’s consideration at its second session.

2. Following a global consultation process and an informal workshop by a visioning group in April 2012, the working group prepared an interim document on the future trends in geospatial information management, which was brought to the second session of the Committee of Experts in August 2012. The Committee expressed its gratitude on the excellent work done to date, provided a number of suggestions on areas for further work, and agreed that, due to its strategic significance, a revised document would be further discussed at the Second High Level Forum on GGIM in Doha in February 2013.

3. The present report summarizes the work of the working group on future trends and the consultation process which has occurred since the second session of the Committee. The background document ‘Future trends in geospatial information management: the five to ten year vision’ has been revised and finalized. The Committee of Experts is invited to endorse the background document and to propose a time frame within which it should be revised. Points for discussion are provided in paragraph 7.

II. Activities of the working group on future trends in geospatial information management

4. At its second session, held in August 2012, the Committee of Experts was invited to submit their comments and inputs on the interim document on future trends in geospatial information management (see E/2012/46, decision 2/101). A number of written submissions, addressing the overall structure, purpose and content of the document, were received, reviewed and documented. The revised document was presented for discussion at the Second High Level Forum in Doha, Qatar, in February 2013 as a final draft. At this time Member States and other delegates were again invited to submit their final contributions to the document. The responses received after the Forum were then used to further strengthen the document.

5. At the second session of the Committee, it was agreed that Member States would provide best practices/user case studies at the national, regional and global levels that clarify the value proposition in the context of raising awareness and understanding of geospatial information. It was considered that the case studies would be significantly beneficial to the Member States as they complement the future trends document by demonstrating actionable outcomes from using geospatial information for policy formulation and decision-making. They also communicate the value of geospatial information to senior decision-makers, support user interventions on sharing the benefits and use of geospatial information, and will be an important resource content in the Committee’s knowledge base. As at 7 June 2013, approximately 54 best practices/case studies have been received from Member States, with 40% from Europe, 20% from Asia and the Pacific, 15% from Africa, 11% from the Americas and 11% from the Arab States. It is intended that a sample set of the best practices/case studies will be uploaded

to the Committee's knowledge portal for initial testing and review prior to the commencement of the third session.

6. The 'Future trends in geospatial information management: the five to ten year vision' is now finalized and offered to the Committee of Experts, Member States and the global geospatial community. It provides a detailed analysis of the main themes and trends identified by the working group. The five broad themes are: trends in technology and the future direction of data creation, maintenance and management; legal and policy developments; skills requirements and training mechanisms; the role of the private and non-government sectors; and the future role of governments in geospatial data provision and management. The document provides important technical background to guide the future work programme of the Committee of Experts and also Member States in the preparation of their geospatial information strategies and plans.

III. Points for discussion

7. The Committee is invited to:

(a) Take note of the consultations held and the revisions to the document made by the working group on future trends in geospatial information management;

(b) Endorse the first edition of the 'Future trends in geospatial information management: the five to ten year vision'; and

(c) Provide guidance on the time frame within which the document should be revised and the second edition prepared.