

SECOND HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON THE GLOBAL
MANAGEMENT OF GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
ORGANIZED BY THE UNITED NATIONS IN COOPERATION WITH THE
GOVERNMENT OF QATAR
MINISTERIAL SEGMENT

PRESENTATION BY JEAN BERTIN OUEDRAOGO,
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INFRASTRUCTURES, TERRITORIAL UNLOCKING
AND TRANSPORTATION

BURKINA FASO

Doha, Qatar, February 4, 2013

- Mr. Chairman ;
- Honorable Ministers ;
- Distinguished Delegates ;
- Ladies and Gentlemen ;

First and foremost, I would like to extend to you the warm greetings of the Government and people of Burkina Faso that I have the great honor to represent at this Second High-Level Forum on the Global Management of Geographic Information, which the Government of Qatar has willingly accepted to host. This forum was established by the United Nations in order to promote the use of geographic information to meet global challenges. It is therefore a framework of consultation and exchange to coordinate the various initiatives of the member states and international organizations on the topic.

So far as it is concerned, Burkina Faso considers that this forum, which gathers decision-makers, senior officers and resource persons, is a good opportunity to affirm the interest of its Government to enjoy the availability of relevant geographic information likely to guide its development activities.

- Distinguished Delegates ;
- Ladies and Gentlemen ;

Due to its diverse applications, geographic information, shall it be recalled, comes before the development actions of a nation, in that it makes it possible to appreciate reliably its ecological potential , learn more about the distribution of its natural resources and above all, to get tools to forecast and manage natural risks and land conflicts.

Geographic information is also used to learn about administrative and border limits and how to materialize and manage them. Undoubtedly, no development sector should do without geographic information.

Mr. Chairman, this is why, I would like to pay vibrant tribute to the men and women who endeavored to take forward the “Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM)” initiative to maturity and to sustained existence through the holding of this second forum. In that regard, I would like to commend and express my warm

gratitude to United Nations Statistic Division and the Government of Qatar, whose joint efforts have led to the holding of this second high-level forum.

- Distinguished Delegates ;
- Ladies and Gentlemen ;

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country located at the heart of West Africa. It has an area of 274,200 square kilometers, with a population estimated at 16 million inhabitants. Its average yearly growth rate ranges from 5 to 6%, with a GDP of \$US7.136 billion, equaling \$US483 per inhabitant. Burkina Faso is one of the least developed countries. To boost its development, it has just adopted an Accelerated Growth and Sustainable Development Strategy (SCADD) for the 2011-2015 period. One of the major axes of this strategy relates to land development. The details of this axis are as follows:

- Organize the use of the country space ;
- Make sure there is coherence in the implantation of big infrastructure and equipment projects and in the settling of cities ;
- Provide local governments with a reference framework for the drawing-up of their policies, strategies and development plans.

Additionally, climate change represents today an actual threat for all the countries, and most importantly for countries with still fragile economies. The severe flooding that struck my country over the last years is evidence of the significance of this threat. Indeed, it affected hardly the country and the populations in that it caused the displacement of a great number of people, which goes with it humanitarian problems. Ensuring the availability of a reliable database, you will agree with me, can contribute to a better management of the consequences of this disaster.

Therefore, the vision by the year 2015 initiated by Burkina Faso, through this new reference document, aims at promoting a productive economy that accelerates growth, increases the living standard, improves and preserves the neighborhood through a well-prepared and effective governance. Considering these ambitions, it was decided that the strategy should use geographic information as an essential tool to guide the action of the Government in order to meet adequately the expectations of populations.

- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- Distinguished Delegates ;

Allow me to elaborate on the assets and commitments of Burkina Faso in the area of geographic information. Although we are below the level of developed countries in this area, there is room and ground for satisfaction and we are encouraged to invest more in this. Indeed, since the creation of the Geographic Institute of Burkina (IGB) in 1976, the Government has been strongly committed to provide development actors with high-quality geographic data.

This commitment has been shown through the development of a master plan mapping of the country, which defined the priorities in the area. This plan, which was initiated by the Geographic Institute of Burkina with the support of the Government and its development partners to whom I renew my sincere gratitude, is now at a well-advanced execution level. Our joint efforts have indeed made it possible to build the following infrastructures:

- a national geodetic network measured by the global positioning system and connected to the International Terrestrial Reference Frame (ITRF). Its meshes are 25 kms long on average and each district has two geodetic stations. This result was achieved through the execution of several projects. The first project was executed with the technical and financial support of the Swiss Cooperation, the second was self-funded by the Government of Burkina Faso and the third was financed with the support of the Government of the United States of America through the Millennium Challenge Corporation. The total cost of the works is estimated at two million and fifty thousand US dollars (\$US 2,050,000) ;
- a network of GNSS CORS receptors (Global Navigation Satellite System / Continuously Operating Reference System), with an estimated cost of one million four hundred thousand US dollars (\$US 1,400,000). The creation of this network with nine (9) positioning receptors was financed by the Government of the United States of America. It covers all the country and the data collected are sent to a server installed at the Geographic Institute of Burkina and shared with users via a specific website. A request was submitted to the International Geolocalization and Satellite Navigation Service (IGS) to integrate the station of Ouagadougou in its network. The latter will

also be integrated in the African Geodetic Reference Frame network (AFREF);

- Two databases of land occupation were developed in 1992 and 2002 from satellite images at an estimated cost of nine hundred and fifty thousand US dollars (\$US 950, 000) received from the Danish Government. These databases made it possible to conduct analyses in specific locations and at given times on topics related to city development, forestry water, etc.

The 2012 database is being prepared and will be developed through the financial support of Luxembourg Cooperation;

- 40% of the country is covered with topographic mapping on a scale of 1 to 50,000.

In addition, a national toponymy commission is working to normalize place names. Its missions include:

- ✓ Drawing the list of place names and conserving them ;
- ✓ Adopting the official linguistic form of each place name ;
- ✓ Drawing the principles, methods and writing rules of all place names ;
- ✓ Setting the criteria for the selection of the names to be attributed to places throughout the national territory and sharing toponyms of Burkina Faso, both at the national and international levels ;

To end, texts on the protection of geodetic and topographic materials, on the adoption of a geodetic and altimetric reference document and on the adoption of norms applicable to topographic and cadastral works have been taken.

Currently, the efforts made by Burkina Faso are still going on with:

- The updating of more than 50 years-old topographic maps on a scale of 1 to 200,000. By the year 2014 or so, the country will enjoy updated topographic maps thanks to its partnership with European Union, which agreed to invest two million four hundred thousand ((2,400, 000) Euros for this activity ;
- The production of 1 to 50,000 scale maps to cover one part of the territory, with the Japanese International Cooperation Agency that finances this activity for a total amount of five million dollars (\$US 5,000,000).

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Faced with the big number of expectations and despite the gains listed above, it is to be noted that specialists in the production and management of geographic information are poorly organized in my country as it is also the case in many African countries. People without basic knowledge on geo-information turn to be producers of topographic maps, which results in disrespect of production norms, the duplication of data, the lack of inter-operability of the data coming from diverse sources.

The availability of high-level human resources to manage geographic information is therefore a major challenge that Burkina Faso needs to meet. To end with, limited financial resources, coupled with the multitude of needs in areas such as health, education, water, to name but few, make it difficult to draw up a good budget to meet the mid-term needs in geographic information.

Distinguished Delegates ;

It goes without saying that each country has its own experience, gains and challenges. This forum gives us the opportunity to identify and share best practices in the production and management of space-related information and to promote such best practices in our respective countries.

Therefore, my belief is that we should lay a particular emphasis on cooperation likely to bring with it the opening of appropriate spaces in which each State; each actor could give and take in return. My country is committed to this end and enjoys a fruitful experience through its participation in the following bodies and events:

- the Committee for the Development of Information, Science and Technology (CODIST) under the leadership of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa;
- the United Nations Experts' Group for the normalization of geographic names;
- the Global Mapping ;
- the Second Administrative Level Boundaries;
- meetings organized by sub-regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of West-African States (ECOWAS) and the West-African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).

These opportunities for exchange are areas in which we can pool our efforts, energies and initiatives to use the applications of geoinformation to serve our institutions. Our states need to be up to the challenge by making theirs the spirit of

sharing resources, re-using data and taking advantage of the facilities extended by information and communication technologies. Considering the above, I encourage the managers of geographic information production agencies, whether from the public or private sector, to take advantage of this session to learn from the various experiences of the forum.

Please, allow me, Mr. Chairman, to commend the efforts made by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, through Ms. Aïda Opoku Mensah and her team, who work relentlessly with African countries to define the orientations of a continental vision.

- Mr. Chairman ;
- Ladies and Gentlemen ;

As future steps, Burkina Faso will move forward in this reflection in order to build a national geospatial data infrastructure with the support of States and organizations enjoying actual expertise in the area. It also intends to endow its territory with a model of local geoid in order to make altimetric measures easier through the Global positioning system.

Mr. Chairman, to end my address, which I hope would have been of interest for each of the participants, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Government and people of Qatar for its warm welcome and well-known hospitality.

In this 21st century, computer-illiterate people are usually referred to as uneducated. In a near future, those who could not use geographic information would likely be referred to also as such.

- Long live the Forum on the Global Geospatial Information Management!
- Long live international cooperation!

Thank you for your kind attention!