

Second High Level Forum on Global Geospatial Information Management Doha, Qatar, 4-6 February 2013

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1. At the Second Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Information Management in New York from August 13-15, 2012 the report E/C20/2012/8 was presented together with a background document and a pptx-presentation. These documents available on the UNGGIM website covered “the International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS) Study on the Status of Mapping in the World”, which was initiated in December 2011 as a joint UNGGIM-ISPRS Project. This project was stated as a consequence of resolution 3 of the UN Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas, held in New York in 2009. I constitutes a follow up of earlier activities of the UN Secretariat on the status of world topographic mapping (1968, 1974, 1980, 1987) and on the status of world cadastral mapping (1980, 1987), with the last UN publication in World Cartography, Vol. XX, 1990 (ST/TCD/14).
2. The UNGGIM-ISPRS Project started with the design of a questionnaire with 27 questions on the national topographic mapping coverage, the national imagery acquisition, the national cadastral coverage and the organizational arrangements.
3. The questionnaire was sent out in April 2012 to the 193 UN member countries by the UNGGIM Secretariat. By the end of June 56 countries replied. At the time of the UN Committee of Experts Meeting in New York in August 2012 it was 69 countries.
4. Since then several appeals have been made by the UNGGIM Secretariat and by ISPRS using personal contacts to regional and national representatives to increase the number of replies. By the end of 2012 90 countries had answered the questionnaire. This is slightly less than half of the UN member countries.
5. As the UN System is based on voluntary international cooperation, it lacks the capabilities to issue international laws and to enforce these other than by consensus. To obtain reports from half of the member states can therefore be considered a success.
6. Nevertheless large parts of the globe could not be included by the questionnaire survey.
7. Europe and most part of the Americas are nearly complete. But the gaps occur in Central and South East Asia including Russia, India, Pakistan, Thailand, the Arab Countries, Israel and for large parts of Africa. The only countries not responding in Europe were Norway, Russia and Belarus. In the Americas Argentina, Venezuela and Cuba did not reply.
8. It would be naïve to assume, that it is lack of cooperation, which prevented the answers. Obviously defense interests are the main obstacles.
9. One of the major issues of the questionnaire was to determine the current coverage of maps or geodata, and to assess their up to dateness.
10. Fortunately there are other avenues open to determine the missing information. One of these is the private map vendor companies, among them Eastview Geospatial in Minnesota, which sells maps and geodata worldwide, regardless of the source. Luckily Eastview has a global database for maps and geodata, which can be ordered through them.
11. The database distinguishes between geodata produced by the over 200 countries or regions of the world and by the defense establishments of the USA and the Russian Federation at different scales, indicating the date of production.

12. The Institute for Photogrammetry and Geoinformation of Leibniz University Hannover has undertaken a study of this source, and it concludes, that the status of map coverage is not as serious as originally anticipated, since military maps produced by the USA or by Russia have become globally available, even if these map data are considered classified in the countries mapped.
13. Not included in the Eastview database are the classified global efforts by NATO at medium scale to produce a global coverage under the name "Multinational Geospatial Co-Production Program MGCP".
14. The availability of geospatial information has moreover been greatly enhanced by the systematic coverage of medium and high resolution satellite imagery as well as by digital orthoimaging from aircraft, not to forget radar imaging in cloud covered areas. Google Earth, Google Maps and Microsoft Bingmaps have used this imagery to deliver global map substitute products for not available or not up to date official maps.
15. The international cooperative efforts of the "Global Map" have by necessity been reduced to scales 1:1 million or 1:250 000. But they do not cover large and medium scales, which are required for planning local sustainable development.
16. The UNGGIM-ISPRS study conducted thus far, has nevertheless successfully directed the attention of half the countries of the world for a comparative analysis of the mapping technologies, which are required to obtain near real-time information in case of disasters and relief operations.
17. The study needs to be extended to more than 90 countries.
18. The 90 replies obtained thus far also need to be verified by further mutual correspondence.
19. This has so far not yet been possible due to the limited time frame and the limited resources available.
20. To make a sustainable attempt, ISPRS has established a new working group on geospatial databases under its commission IV to continue these studies during the 2012-2016 Congress Period. A link with the UNGGIM Secretariat is hoped for.
21. The first meeting of this working group will take place in Novosibirsk alongside the Interexpo-GeoSiberia from April 22-26, 2013, organized by the Siberian State Academy for Geodesy.
22. It is also realized, that topographic and thematic mapping of the land areas of the globe do not extend to the oceans of the world, which cover 2/3 of the globe, and which have been very inadequately mapped with respect to hydrography and bathymetry. ISPRS is not in a position to spearhead such efforts, but it suggests a cooperation led by IHO and the Oceanographic Institutes of the World, in which it may cooperate.
23. A separate background paper on the analysis of the study based on the questionnaire is separately prepared for the High level Forum.

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