

**Third High Level Forum on
UN Global Geospatial Information Management**

‘Sustainable Development with Geospatial Information’

**Beijing, China
22-24 October 2014**

Concept Note

Background:

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM), in collaboration with the Government of China, through its National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation (NASG), will host the Third High Level Forum on UN Global Geospatial Information Management at NASG’s Headquarters in Beijing, China, from 22-24 October 2014.

The Third High Level Forum is being staged in pursuance of the mandate from the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to convene global forums to promote comprehensive dialogue on global geospatial information management with all relevant governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The event will continue the discussions and consultations from previous High Level Forums, provide follow up on issues from the formal inter-governmental meetings of the Committee of Experts, and provide Member States and geospatial stakeholders with the unique opportunity to share and learn from each other, new ideas, methods and strategies to support local, regional and global sustainable development initiatives.

The Forum will be substantively supported by the Regional Committees of UN-GGIM, including for Asia and the Pacific (UNGGIM-AP), the Americas (UN-GGIM: Americas), Europe (UN-GGIM: Europe), the Arab States (UN-GGIM: Arab States), and Africa (UN-GGIM: Africa).

The continued involvement of the geospatial industry at the most senior levels will be a key component of the Forum’s technical program. It will actively engage with the industry in discussions regarding key issues of both policy and technology through the sessions, while demonstrating some of the trends and directions in which the industry is heading.

Forum Outcomes:

In 2014, the High Level Forum offers the opportunity for the global geospatial information community to pay particular attention to the critical roles of geospatial information science, technology and innovation, as tools that are able to integrate the 3

pillars (economic, social, environmental) of sustainable development, and as important geographic elements of the post-2015 development agenda. Therefore, the overarching theme of the Third High Level Forum is **‘Sustainable Development with Geospatial Information’**.

The Outcome Document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, released 19 July 2014 (<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/focussdgs.html>), called for the need to “increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts” to support the monitoring of the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

While the SDGs will be negotiated at the political level, their means of implementation will rely heavily on the availability of human and physical geography data, much of it likely to be new data, to measure and monitor change and progress. A number of practical targets and indicators will eventually be required, and will need to be well defined (accurate, reliable and understandable), measurable over time, cost effective and clearly and easily communicated. As the SDGs evolve, there will be a need to create a network of global data and information that is supported by the best science, tools, and technology to analyze and model data, create maps and detect and monitor change over time in a consistent and standardized manner. Much of this will be geospatial information.

As the peak inter-governmental mechanism under the United Nations, the Committee of Experts on UN-GGIM has the mandate and responsibility to foster a geographic approach to the goals of the post-2015 development agenda. Bringing all stakeholders together, the Third High Level Forum will address the role of geospatial information in the post-2015 development agenda, and current critical sustainable development matters such as: mitigating and managing climate change and disasters; sustainable cities and human settlements; science, technology, and innovation to measure and monitor progress; and working together across borders and regions.

As in previous Forums, a Ministerial Segment will be convened in order for high level decision makers to share and exchange views with delegates on the very important role of geospatial information in national and sustainable development.

Wednesday, 22 October

Opening Ceremony and Ministerial Segment

Welcome, opening address, and keynote speeches.

Interventions by invited Ministers, followed by a moderated panel discussion.

Session 1: Geospatial information for the post-2015 development agenda

Geospatial information services and platforms have become key contributors to improved decision making and policy formulation, and are able to enhance the capability for governments, international organizations and researchers to analyse, monitor and report on sustainable development and other global concerns. Scientists and practitioners understand that the ability to accurately and reliably measure and monitor change and progress will depend on human and physical geography data and geospatial information, but policy and decision makers are still learning what the need for geography means. With regard to ‘means of implementation’ the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals calls for greater data monitoring and accountability, and by 2020 ‘increase significantly the availability of high-quality and timely data’. This session will demonstrate the critical and integrative role that geospatial information is able to play in measuring and monitoring the post-2015 development agenda.

Thursday, 23 October

Session 2: Sustainable cities and human settlements

This session will discuss the role of geospatial information in making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe and sustainable – contributing to urbanisation, land tenure and use, population growth, and food and water security. The rates of rapid urbanization that are overwhelming land management and administration systems, especially in the developing world, are arguably one of the greatest challenges for the twenty first century. There is general consensus that a solution for addressing these challenges can be founded on sustainable cities, yet an essential foundation for planning and implementation of strategies for sustainable cities are effective land information systems. The need for homogeneous and reliable geospatial information for sustainable urbanization cannot be over-emphasised considering: property values (including their associated economic production) that mandate accurate demarcation/boundary re-establishment; the subterranean utilities infrastructure which have to be accurately located during developments; lack of security of land tenure in developing countries; response to environmental challenges based on accurate data such as height when pre-empting flood risks; and various data sources from different agencies which have to coincide precisely.

Session 3: Climate change and disaster mitigation

In October 2013, the 180 participants of the Chengdu Forum, with the theme ‘Development and Applications in Urban Hazard Mapping’, concluded that geospatial information has a vital role to play in all phases of hazard and disaster risk management and reduction, and it extends the ability for nations to not only map their geography and topography, but also those areas that are vulnerable to natural hazards, particularly in urban environments. Tackling climate change and disaster risk reduction requires a data driven and a geospatial approach – risk, hazard, exposure, vulnerability, communities,

infrastructure at risk, etc. It is also a statistical approach – populations, addresses, postcode, census, village, etc. There is a need to take a more holistic ‘geographic’ approach to strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity to climate induced hazards and natural disasters. This session will discuss the critical importance of geospatial information in addressing the very dynamic nature of climate change, disasters, risk reduction and mitigation.

Friday, 24 October

Session 4: Science, technology, and innovation to measure and monitor progress

The High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda called for a “data revolution” for sustainable development, and emphasised the need to improve the quality of information available to citizens. The Common African Position on the SDGs, published in March 2014, emphasized that implementation required “investment in and strengthening of national statistical capacities and geospatial information systems for the collection, analysis, production and dissemination of disaggregated data to measure and evaluate policy effectiveness; and promote a culture of evidence-based decision making.” This session will present tangible examples of how geospatial information science, technology and innovation are being leveraged to support sustainable development objectives, and will discuss the future role of geospatial information in this critical domain. Within any country, and in particular to address the growing needs for sustainable urbanization, measuring development and progress will depend on the availability of and access to national fundamental data themes and spatial data infrastructures that reliably collect, integrate, analyse, model, fuse and aggregate data for dissemination and decision making.

The session will also cover topics such as legal and policy frameworks, standards, interoperability, and integration.

Session 5: Working together across borders and regions

In several UN-GGIM forums Ministers and experts have emphasized common global challenges including: sustainable geodetic networks; mitigating and managing disasters; population growth and food security; urban planning and sustainable development; and privacy and confidentiality in the face of growing public demands for data access. Further, Ministers have specifically stressed the importance of being able to work together across borders and regions when addressing global challenges related to sustainable development. Therefore, this session will provide examples of efforts being made to work more cohesively across nations and regions, and the associated challenges in doing so.

Summary and Issuing of the Beijing Declaration