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Opening Statement
International Workshop on the Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Information
NASG, Beijing, China, 9-12 June 2014

Your Excellency Mr. Kurexi Maihesuti, Vice Minister, Ministry of Land and Resources,
Director-General, National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation of China;
Ms. Gemma Van Halderen and Mr. Rolando Ocampo, co-chairs of the United Nations Expert
Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information;
Dr. Li Pengde, Deputy Director General, National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and
Geoinformation of China (hereafter referred to as NASG), President of UN-GGIM Asia-Pacific;

Dear Participants and Colleagues,

On behalf of the United Nations and the UN-GGIM Secretariat, I warmly welcome you to this International Workshop on the Integration of Geospatial and Statistical Information. It is very rewarding to see so many experts gathered here from two very different professional communities – geospatial and statistical. Today, we meet as one community – a geostatistical community. As a mix of these professionals from all regions of the world, from more than 40 countries, this technical workshop is truly a global one, not only geographically, but also statistically!!

I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to Mr. Kurexi Maihesuti, Dr. Li Pengde, – and their team – for having taken the initiative to organize and host this ambitious and timely workshop here in NASG’s headquarters. I also thank the Regional Committee of UN-GGIM for Asia and the Pacific for its efforts in promoting the work of UN-GGIM-Asia-Pacific, including this workshop.

The UN-GGIM agenda is evolving at a time when our world is facing multiple challenges in achieving sustainable development. Accurate, timely and reliable geospatial and statistical information is playing a vital role in helping to advance sustainable development initiatives across the globe. The United Nations recognizes, and is deeply appreciative of, international cooperation and country-led initiatives such as this workshop.

Indeed, we are meeting here in China for the third successive year, under the auspices of the GGIM China Trust Fund Project. The project, entitled “Geospatial Information Management Capacity Development in China and other Developing Countries”, covers a five-year period, from 2013 to 2017.

The Trust Fund was created to strengthen the geospatial information capacity in China and other developing countries, and is intended to support:

- institutional and policy frameworks;
- data acquisition, management and delivery;
- enabling technologies and information services; and
- the requirements for data standards, sharing, accessibility, and dissemination.

This has particular relevance to the integration of geospatial and statistical information.

I congratulate NASG of China for their foresight in initiating this Trust Fund, and associated annual Forums. The initiative represents a substantial investment and commitment by the Chinese Government. Developing countries in particular, and the global geospatial community in general, are benefiting immensely from this initiative.

The geospatial and statistical professional communities are major contributors of information used as evidence in decision-making processes across many sectors, both public and private. With the increasing complexity of national and global challenges and issues, the need to understand the interrelationships across the economic, social and environmental pillars – the 3 pillars of sustainable development – is becoming critical. In today’s global community, there is a clear recognition of the need to, and value of, linking geospatial information (which includes much environmental information) and statistical information (which includes much socio-economic information) to improve the accuracy of the evidence on which decisions will be made. The challenge being faced is how best to achieve this integration in an effective and consistent way, including for mutual benefits for both communities.

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management and the United Nations Statistical Commission are addressing the challenges of managing and effectively integrating geospatial and statistical information nationally and globally. In 2013, in each of their respective annual sessions, they “acknowledged the critical

importance of integrating geospatial information with statistics and socio-economic data and the development of a geospatial-statistical framework, especially in the context of the on-going debate on the post-2015 development agenda”. They have established an Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information tasked with developing and advancing the implementation of a global statistical-geospatial framework as a standard for the integration of statistical and geospatial information. A key component of this task will be inclusive global consultations and communications with relevant experts in determining the metrics of a statistical-geospatial framework. This International Workshop provides a valuable platform for contributing to these consultations and achieving this task.

You will observe that the programme over the next 3 days is structured so that you can share experiences and methodologies in the integration of geospatial and statistical information, and gain a clear understanding of the key issues and challenges to develop a statistical-geospatial framework. We hope that you will also identify and agree on the topics that should be carried forward to the United Nations Global Forum on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, to be held 4-5 August 2014 in New York in conjunction with the 4th Session of UN-GGIM. These important topics will also provide input into the global decision-making mechanism – the Committee of Experts on UN-GGIM and the UN Statistical Commission.

I wish you a productive meeting over the next three days, followed by what I am sure will be most stimulating and enjoyable technical visits. Thank you for your continued support to the work and vision of UN-GGIM.

Thank you.
