

CONCEPT NOTE
First Expert Group Meeting
of
Inter-agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators Working Group on Geospatial Information
(IAEG-SDGs: WGGI),
Mexico City, Mexico,
12 – 14 December 2016

Background

The General Assembly adopted resolution 70/1 of 25 September 2015, in which the Assembly adopted ‘Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, which specifically recognizes the need for new data acquisition and integration approaches to improve the availability, quality, timeliness and disaggregation of data to support the implementation of the new development agenda at all levels, including “to exploit the contribution to be made by a wide range of data, including earth observations and geospatial information, while ensuring national ownership in supporting and tracking progress” (para 76). The follow-up and review processes at all levels will be guided by a series of principles, one of which is to “be rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated, including by geographic locations, relevant in national contexts”. (para 74.g).

The global importance of geospatial information was recognised by the United Nations in July 2011 when, at its 47th plenary meeting, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), recognizing the urgent need to take concrete action to strengthen international cooperation in the area of global geospatial information management, established the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) in accordance with the terms of reference contained in the annex to the resolution. As the peak inter-governmental mechanism to make joint decisions and set directions on the production and use of geospatial information within national and global policy frameworks, UN-GGIM also provides a forum for Member States to strengthen the geospatial information management capacities of developing countries for better policy making at national, regional and global levels.

At its 46th Session in March 2015, the United Nations Statistical Commission established the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs), composed of Member States and including regional and international agencies as observers. The IAEG-SDGs was tasked to develop a global indicator framework for the 17 goals and 169 targets of the 2030 Agenda, and to support its implementation. At its 47th Session in March 2016, the Statistical Commission agreed as a practical starting point the global indicator framework consisting of 230 indicators, subject to future technical refinement.

To meet the aspirations and demands of the 2030 Agenda, it is necessary for the global indicator framework to adequately and systematically address the issue of alternative data sources and methodologies, including geospatial information and earth observations in the context of geographic location. The report of the IAEG-SDGs to the Statistical Commission (in March 2016) noted that the integration of statistical data and geospatial information will be key for the production of a number of indicators. As a means to address these issues, and to address specific areas relevant to SDG indicator implementation, the IAEG-SDGs created the Working Group on Geospatial Information at its third meeting in Mexico City 30 March to 1 April 2016. Soon after, the IAEG-SDGs finalised the

Working Group’s terms of reference, which guide the activities and modalities of the Working Group.

The Working Group currently composed of 16 national representatives who are subject matter experts from 16 Member States. In addition the Working Group has included 6 experts representing United Nations systems organizations and other multilateral organizations. The Working Group is co-chaired by Sweden and Mexico and had its first meeting on 4 August 2016 on the margin of the sixth session of UN-GGIM. A draft 2016/2017 work plan has been prepared.

Terms of Reference and Work Plan

The primary objective of the Working Group is to ensure from a statistical and geographic location perspective that the key principle of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind is reflected in the Global indicator framework. Tasks include considering how geospatial information can contribute to the indicators and metadata:

- a) as a direct indicator in itself;
- b) to support and augment statistical data;
- c) to improve the production process of statistical data;
- d) to validate national statistical data inputs;
- e) to communicate and visualize the geographic dimensions and context of the indicators where appropriate; and
- f) to provide granularity and disaggregation of the indicators where appropriate.

As the Terms of Reference called for an initial analysis of geospatial inputs and metadata needs for the indicators to be developed and presented to the IAEG-SDGs for consideration, for this 2016/2017 period, the work plan will focus on a series of immediate activities as follows –

- i) Review the agreed global indicators through a ‘geographic location’ lens;
- ii) Review the metadata compiled for the global indicators through a ‘geographic location’ lens;
- iii) Consider and review the tier classifications for the agreed global indicator, their level of “maturity” and appropriateness from a ‘geographic location’ lens;
- iv) Identify existing geospatial data gaps, geospatial methodological and measurement issues; and
- v) Consider how geospatial information can contribute to the indicators and metadata.



Figure 1: Overview of Progress to date

An expert group meeting is needful and now urgent to allow the Working Group and invited resource persons and experts to advance the objectives and tasks before the Working Group. The First Expert Group Meeting of the Working Group will be a three-day working meeting planned for 12 – 14 December 2016 hosted by Mexico in Mexico City.

Participation

All the current 22 members of the Working Group comprising representatives of either national statistical offices or national mapping/geospatial information agencies, United Nations systems organizations and other multilateral organizations will be invited to participate. In addition, 2 resource persons/experts and 2 officials of United Nations will also participate in this first expert group meeting. The host will also select and nominate national experts to this meeting.

A number of representatives who have subject matter expertise from non-member countries of IAEG-SDGs: WGGI, United Nations systems organizations, other multilateral organizations and academic and research organizations may request to join the meeting.

Objective

Experts at this meeting is expected to focus and work on identifying, prioritising and begin to develop the "how" to address identified geospatial information gaps, issues and contributions to the global indicator framework and hence the SDGs.

This will require an analysis of geospatial inputs and metadata needs for the global indicator framework. This analysis, expected to be carried out by an International Consultant prior to the meeting, will inform this Expert Group Meeting on geospatial information and earth observations gaps, issues and opportunities within the current formulation of metadata and data informing the global indicator framework. The analysis will allow the meeting and by extension the Working Group to prioritise, identify and develop appropriate approaches and methodologies, the associated data needs, data sources and scale.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of the three-day expert group meeting is as follows –

- a) With earth observations and in particular satellite and aerial imageries and datasets, an understanding of available global data sets that is available and accessible consistently over space and time which can inform the global indicator framework.
- b) Identify and agree on a set of indicators where contribution from geospatial information definitively informs the indicator directly; support and augment statistical data; and improve the production process of statistical data.
- c) Prioritise and agree to develop approaches and methodologies for a subset of the indicators agreed in a) above with timelines and milestones. This development will include associated data needs, data sources and scale.
- d) Propose and develop approaches for undertaking methodological work on specific areas for improving disaggregation by geographic location and in particular for national and sub-national reporting.

Outline Programme

12 Dec 2016	Morning	Introduction & Scene Setting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> objective, organisation of work and desired outcomes updates and progress to date analysis of geospatial inputs and metadata needs gaps, issues and opportunities
	Afternoon	Earth observations for global indicator framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> existing earth observations that are currently informing the global indicator framework other (and useful) earth observations that can inform the global indicator framework global data sets that is available and accessible consistently over space and time which can inform the global indicator framework Mandated global reporting mechanism (data flow from national to global level)
13 Dec 2016	Morning	Geospatial information for global indicator framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and agree on indicators where geospatial information definitively informs the indicator directly Identify and agree on indicators where geospatial information definitively support and augment statistical data Identify and agree on indicators where geospatial information definitively improves the production of statistical data.
	Afternoon	Approaches and methodologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise and agree on indicators where work will begin to develop approaches and methodologies so that geospatial information can inform directly the indicator Prioritise and agree on indicators where work will begin to develop understanding and methodologies so that geospatial information can support, augment or improve statistical data Discuss and agree on “who, what and when” for this development
14 Dec 2016	Morning	Disaggregation by geographic location <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Propose and develop approaches for undertaking methodological work on improving disaggregation by geographic location Discuss and agree on “who, what and when” for this development
	Afternoon	Wrap-up & Summary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EGM summary Review of 2016/2017 Work Plan Consideration for Second Expert Group Meeting Way forward