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UN-GGIM Paper - Authoritative Data in an Evolving Geospatial Landscape: An Exploration of Policy and Legal Challenges

Working Group on Policy and Legal Frameworks
for Geospatial Information Management

United Nations Committee of Experts on
Global Geospatial Information Management

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Agenda

- Review of tasking from the Policy and Legal Frameworks WG work plan
- Summary of paper contents
 - **Part 1: An Overview of “Authoritative” Data**
 - **Part 2: Domain Applications of Authoritative Data**
 - **Part 3: Governing Authoritative Data- Discussion & Analysis**
 - **Part 4: The Path Forward – Policy and Legal Considerations**
- Timeline



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Tasking from WG Work Plan - Deliverable

- Explore and identify policy and legal challenges related to authoritative data, authority and custodianship, and propose possible solutions to real-world problems
 - To be tabled at the August 2023 UN-GGIM Annual Session
 - Ongoing global consultation includes UN-GGIM functional, regional and thematic groups.



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Part 1: An Overview of “Authoritative” Data

- The paper structure reflects a traditional research approach, beginning with an overview of relevant literature, presented without commentary.
 - Following this approach, *Part 1* provides an overview of how various organizations understand and apply the ‘authoritative’ data designation, drawing from the results of a cross-domain literature review.
- The section identifies areas of shared understanding and divergence, governance considerations for data designated as authoritative, and explores how authoritative data is understood across geospatial domains and national contexts.



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Part 2: Domain Applications of Authoritative Data

- *Part 2* of the paper represents the perspective of domains with more well established, legally rooted understandings and uses of authoritative data, including:
 - Geodesy
 - Geographical names
 - Marine
 - Land administration
- Each subsection is authored by domain experts and discusses the authoritative data designation practices and use within each discipline.



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Part 3: Governing Authoritative Data- Discussion & Analysis

- *Part 3* offers discussion and analysis of the literature review summarized in *Part 1*, including the following key insights:
 - It is difficult to establish a universal definition of authoritativeness as understandings and definitions differ across domains/fields, countries and producers/providers (public, private, civil society, academic).
 - Domains with well established geospatial information management systems are able to offer clearer guidance about the meaning and application of authoritativeness.
 - In these domains, definitions of authoritativeness are entrenched in law, and notions of authority and/or custodianship of data are tightly regulated.



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Part 3: Governing Authoritative Data- Discussion & Analysis (2)

- The paper suggests a “fit for purpose” frame for domains seeking guidance.
 - In order for any data asset, process or organization to be considered as *authoritative*, it must be fit for its intended, predefined purpose(s).
- Domains in national contexts that adhere to precise, legally entrenched definitions of authoritative data and authoritativeness may find that the fit for purpose framing adds little value to their shared understanding or fails to align with their use of the designation.
 - In these cases, domains may find they have no need to adopt the fit for purpose frame.
- Domains or national contexts with less well-defined understandings of authoritative data may find the fit for purpose criterion sheds light on potential ambiguities and may choose to use it as a springboard for developing a national authoritative data governance model.



Part 4: The Path Forward – Policy and Legal Considerations

- *Part 4* presents a path forward for domains and national contexts seeking guidance in their governance of authoritative data production, use, and distribution.
- For decision makers seeking guidance, it outlines considerations for developing a robust authoritative governance framework that can be used to strengthen existing approaches or to design an innovative authoritative data governance systems.
 - Domains should continue to define the concept in accordance with accepted traditions and expert-informed understandings.



Timeline

- On Friday March 10th, the Authoritative Data paper was circulated to UN-GGIM members, including the Geodesy Subcommittee.
 - Email included response form for submitting comments by *May 1st, 2023*.
 - Two webinar sessions will be held on April 11th to allow participants to share comments in a live forum.
- *Final paper to be tabled at the Thirteenth Session of UN-GGIM, 2 – 4 August 2023.*

Work plan: Next Steps

- Paper findings to be applied in a crisis use case context.



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Thank you

We welcome your questions and comments.



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