

## Eighth meeting of the UN Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information and the seventh meeting of the Working Group on Geospatial Information of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on the SDG Indicators

17 – 19 September 2024

### Concept Note and Provisional Agenda

#### Preamble

The nature of our interconnected world emphasizes that sustainable development isn't just for 2030 – it's about preventing cascading systemic collapse. Yet, we face a narrowing pathway to protect our people and planet, and we are now past the midpoint of the journey to 2030. The data gaps and uneven implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provide a stark challenge for the coming five and half years. Regrettably, our global progress towards realizing the ambition of the 2030 Agenda has been limited, with the Secretary-General's 2024 report on 'Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals'<sup>1</sup> noting that "signs of a determined, sustained global comeback have yet to emerge... the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, a growing number of conflicts, geopolitical and trade tensions, and the ever-worsening effects of climate change have combined to leave the Goals in peril".

The Secretary-General's call at the 2022 SDG Moment to "rescue the SDGs" highlighted the immense challenge to our collective ambitions. Still, the integrative and transformational potential of geospatial information offers hope in overcoming these challenges. The report on 'Geospatial information for Sustainable Development' to the thirteenth session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) in 2023<sup>2</sup> underscored this, noting that "countries can benefit from the maturity of the many frameworks and resources developed by the Committee of Experts since the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs were envisaged. These endeavours must be intensified to strengthen local-to-global resilience, uphold the aspirations of the SDGs and bridge the geospatial digital divide". In this regard, the report emphasized that to "dismantle the barriers and divisions that hinder progress; the keyword is 'integration'...It is essential to foster collaborative endeavours that unite communities to avoid fragmentation and break down silos.

Today, the maturity of the Committee of Experts's frameworks, anchored by the United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF), demonstrates the very means, the '**what**', countries can use to realise this ambition. By way of example, the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF) provides the '**how**' that brings everything together through a principles-based approach grounded in the consistent geocoding of statistical unit records and common geographies. Moreover, the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap communicates the '**why**'. The recognition that the SDGs are in peril is recognised at the highest levels. However, in many cases, the crucial role of geography is overlooked. Now is the time to unlock the full potential of geospatial information to drive progress and meet the ambition of the 2030 Agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> see A/79/79 E/2024/54 'Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals'

<sup>2</sup> see E/C.20/2023/11/Add.1 [https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/13th-Session/documents/E-C.20-2023-11-Add.1\\_Sustainable\\_Development\\_and\\_Climate\\_Resilience\\_20Jul2023.pdf](https://ggim.un.org/meetings/GGIM-committee/13th-Session/documents/E-C.20-2023-11-Add.1_Sustainable_Development_and_Climate_Resilience_20Jul2023.pdf)



## Background

### ***The Global Statistical Geospatial Framework***

Developed by the Expert Group, the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework is a principles-based framework that facilitates the integration of statistical and geospatial information. A Framework for the World, the GSGF enables a range of data to be integrated from both statistical and geospatial communities and, through the application of its five Principles and supporting key elements, permits the production of harmonized and standardized geospatially enabled statistical data. The resulting data can then be integrated with statistical, geospatial, and other information to inform and facilitate data-driven and evidence-based decision-making to support local, sub-national, national, regional, and global development priorities and agendas, such as the 2030 Round of Population and Housing Censuses and the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs. Presently, the Expert Group is leading a revision of the GSGF to incorporate experiences of implementation and other advances.

### ***The United Nations Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information***

The EG-ISGI is mandated by the UN Statistical Commission (by its decision 48/108) to be the overall coordination group for all activities in the area of the integration of statistical and geospatial information. In this regard, the EG-ISGI reports to UN-GGIM to help bridge the data divides and strengthen the coordination and coherence between the global statistical and geospatial communities.

### ***SDGs Geospatial Roadmap and the ‘Rescuing the SDGs with Geospatial Information’ discussion paper***

The recent activities of the Working Group have led to the development of the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap as a resource that helps Member States to communicate, guide and enhance the awareness of geospatial information for the SDGs (adopted by the Statistical Commission decision 53/101). The Working Group is recently developing a discussion paper, “Rescuing the SDGs: How geospatial information can transform the production, measurement, monitoring and dissemination of SDG indicators”, to provide key guidance and actions on how the geographic dimension can be strengthened within the global indicator framework.

### ***The Working Group on Geospatial Information of the IAEG-SDGs***

The Working Group on Geospatial Information of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on the Sustainable Development Goal Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) has the primary objective of ensuring, from a statistical and geospatial perspective, that one of the key principles of the 2030 Agenda, to leave no one behind, is reflected in the Global indicator framework of the SDGs. Specific objectives are to: 1. Provide expertise and advice to the IAEG-SDGs, custodian agencies and the larger statistical community as to how geospatial data, Earth observations and other new data sources can reliably and consistently contribute to the production and dissemination of the indicators. 2. Review options and provide guidance to the IAEG-SDGs, as to the role of national statistical offices (NSOs) in considering geospatial data and Earth observations as a means to contribute to and validate datasets as part of official statistics for SDG indicators.



## ***The adoption of a globally harmonized definition to enable geographic disaggregation of the SDGs***

In 2020, the UN Statistical Commission, during its 51<sup>st</sup> session<sup>3</sup> endorsed the methodology for the delineation of cities and urban and rural areas for international and regional statistical comparison purposes and requested the Statistics Division and the sponsoring organizations to continue reviewing the implementation of the methodology and report back in its future sessions. The methodology, which helps countries to classify their territories in a continuum of urban-rural settlements (as opposed to the binary classification of urban and rural areas) not only integrates geospatial and statistical data as central elements to its application but creates a consistent framework for disaggregating data on the SDGs by geographic location. Since 2020, partners working in a global voluntary commitment on the method implementation (including UN-Habitat, the European Commission, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNSD, the World Bank, FAO, and ILO) have supported over 100 countries to deploy the approach using nationally produced data and use delineated areas to calculate disaggregated data on the SDGs. A report on the application of the method will be presented to the Statistics Commission in 2026.

### **Objectives**

Both UN-GGIM and the Statistical Commission recognise the important role of the integration of statistical and geospatial information in all its forms, including Earth observations, for making informed decision-making in response to climate change-related issues, disasters, food production and other thematic areas of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at both national and local levels. In this regard, both UN-GGIM<sup>4</sup> and the Statistical Commission<sup>5</sup> have urged Member States to implement and operationalise the GSGF as the guiding framework that facilitates the integration of statistical and geospatial information, and both bodies have supported the development of the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap.

Both the Expert Group and the Working Group have collaborated to raise awareness of the importance of geo-statistical integration through mutually supporting work programmes (notably leading to the development of the paper 'Examples of the implementation of the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap: disaggregating the SDGs by geographic location' which highlights how the GSGF enables disaggregation of the SDGs by geographic location), and by convening several side events at relevant intergovernmental meetings. In recognition of the opportunity to collaborate and mutually advance in this area, both the Expert Group (at its virtual meeting on 23 May) and the Working Group (at its virtual meeting on 20 June) agreed to convene this Joint Expert Meeting, following UN-Habitat's offer to host it.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/51st-session/documents/2020-37-FinalReport-E.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> UN-GGIM decision 13/108: *Urged Member States to continue to implement and operationalize the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework as a tool for attaining geospatially enabled statistical data for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and recognized that addressing the many data integration challenges presented by complex issues such as climate change and disaster resilience required the full implementation of the Framework at the national and regional levels*

<sup>5</sup> Statistical Commission decision 54/118: *Welcomed the Expert Group's offer to assist the Commission in its efforts to implement Economic and Social Council resolution 2022/3 and Noted with concern that several countries, especially developing countries, still lack adequate capacity to integrate statistical and geospatial information, urged the continued implementation and operationalization of the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework*



National, regional and international experts from governments, the United Nations system, SDG Custodian Agencies, international organisations, the private sector, academic and research institutions and civil societies are expected to engage, share, and discuss appropriate and applicable sciences and knowledge, practices, and experiences, and consider priority issues and actions to:

- Address the challenges faced in the collection, processing, analysis, and dissemination of reliable, timely and accessible geospatial data and earth observations for better evidence-based policymaking and the 2030 Agenda;
- Leverage national geospatial information management, its systems and infrastructures, and today's geospatial technologies to collate and integrate the data needed to keep the promise to leave no one behind;
- Discuss the recent mandates provided to the Expert Group and Working Group by UN-GGIM and the Statistical Commission to develop applicable Work Plans and establish future working modalities to ensure the Expert Group and Working Group can deliver their objectives and functions to Member States;
- Review and deliberate their respective future directions, including identifying how to advance the GSGF, SDGs Geospatial Roadmap, and other relevant internationally agreed norms and practices, while also considering how to optimize resources and capabilities across the membership of both groups;
- Agree on the next steps to support Member States in strengthening statistical geospatial integration and coordination towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda;
- Identify the means of providing guidance to Member States that enable the full disaggregation of statistical data, including SDG indicators, by geography (considering classifications by degree of urbanisation endorsed by the UN statistical commission);
- Provide Member State representatives responsible for geo-statistical integration the opportunity to discuss challenges in the domain of statistical and geospatial integration and set forth work plans that identify and advance solutions in a participatory and inclusive manner; and,
- Discuss business modalities, where appropriate.



## Provisional Agenda

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome, introductions, and setting the scene</li> <li>Reports, highlights, updates and considerations               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report of the co-Chairs on the activities, progress and accomplishments of the Expert- and Working Group</li> <li>Report of the Secretariat, including the programme of work of the Committee of Experts</li> </ol> </li> <li>The importance of geospatial information in disaggregating the SDGs at local and global levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National and regional perspectives on geospatially integrated statistical data to national priorities and global development agendas</li> <li>Strengthening regional coordination and ensuring regional to global coherence</li> <li>Sustaining the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework: Towards GSGF 2.0</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accelerating implementation and strengthening geospatial capacity</li> <li>Implementing the GSGF together with the UN-IGIF at the country level</li> </ul>
Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Looking beyond the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap</li> <li>Toward the 2025 work plan for the IAEG-SDGs WGGI</li> <li>The business modalities of the WGGI</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open discussion on the next five years to 2030 and beyond.</li> <li>The One UN Geospatial Situation Room</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Toward the 2024 – 2026 work plan of the Expert Group</li> <li>The business modalities of the Expert Group</li> <li>The fifty-sixth Statistical Commission</li> <li>Summary and close</li> </ul>

The Steering Group of the Expert Group will meet on 16 September 2024, one day prior to the Eighth meeting of the Expert Group, to discuss practical arrangements related to the objectives and functions of the Expert Group. This is a closed meeting, solely for members of the Steering Group.

### Participation and Language

This is an in-person and closed meeting. Participants are expected to be members of the United Nations Expert Group on the Integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information, IAEG-SDGs Working Group on Geospatial Information, invited expert representatives of Member States, regional committees, functional groups, and thematic networks of the Committee of Experts. Interested national representatives of Member States wishing to participate and contribute to this meeting may request to participate.





**UN-GGIM**  
UNITED NATIONS  
COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON  
GLOBAL GEOSPATIAL  
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

This meeting will be conducted in English only.

## Dates

17-19 September 2024

## Venue

United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)  
United Nations Office Nairobi (UNON) Conference Centre,  
United Nations Ave,  
Westlands, Nairobi,  
Kenya

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