



**First Expert Meeting of the UN-GGIM and IHO
Joint Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information
“Advancing Integrated Marine Geospatial Information Management”**

Chiang Mai, Thailand

4 – 8 May 2026

Concept Note

Objectives

Covering about 70% of the Earth’s surface, marine and inland waters are essential to climate adaptation, global trade, food and energy security, ecosystem health, and human well-being, with marine geospatial information playing a critical role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Recent global developments—such as the adoption of the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) and the ongoing UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030)—underscore the growing urgency for robust geospatial information solutions to strengthen ocean governance, management and sustainability.

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) has consistently emphasized the importance of integrating marine geospatial information into national geospatial frameworks and strategies to support sustainable development and informed decision-making. In August 2024, at its [fourteenth session](#), the Committee welcomed a proposal to merge its Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information (WG-MGI) with the International Hydrographic Organization’s Marine Spatial Data Infrastructures Working Group (IHO-MSDIWG) into a single, unified global Joint Working Group. This decision was driven by the recognition that a coordinated, holistic approach to managing terrestrial, coastal, and general marine geospatial data is critical for enhancing coastal resilience, supporting the blue economy, addressing climate challenges, and preserving biodiversity. Following this guidance, WG-MGI collaborated closely with the IHO-MSDIWG through 2024-2025 to update its working modalities and Terms of Reference.

In August 2025, at its [fifteenth session](#), the Committee and IHO formally endorsed the formation of the *UN-GGIM and IHO Joint Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information*, with updated [Terms of Reference](#) (see Annex to the report) and a unified governance structure. The Committee commended the Working Group’s efforts to raise awareness of the value of marine geospatial information and encouraged the availability, accessibility, and integration of such information for societal, environmental, and economic benefit. It also urged that sustained efforts be made to provide practical guidance and support for countries in implementing the Operational Framework for Integrated Marine Geospatial Information Management (UN-IGIF-Hydro) at the national level. The newly established Joint Working Group carries forward these mandates and the work of its predecessor bodies, now leveraging combined expertise and resources to strengthen global marine geospatial information management.

The meeting will be the first in-person convening of the unified Joint Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information and will be held from 4 to 8 May 2026 at the Kantary Hills Hotel in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The meeting will confirm the Joint Working Group’s workplan and strategic priorities, and review the standards, frameworks, and technical methodologies of the predecessor groups, and discuss joint priorities and operational arrangements to advance integrated marine geospatial information management guidance, methods, and activities following its formal establishment in August 2025.



The meeting provides a platform for members of the Joint Working Group to collaboratively advance the Group's mandates and roles, with key objectives and focus areas include:

- a) **Strategic Direction and Priorities:** Agree on a shared vision and strategic priorities, aligned with the new Terms of Reference, to support global and regional initiatives, national capacity development, UN-IGIF-Hydro implementation, UNCLOS and BBNJ contributions, innovation, and land–sea integration across the nine UN-IGIF-Hydro Strategic Pathways.
- b) **Joint Workplan (2026–2028):** Develop a consolidated workplan merging former activities, aligned with the nine UN-IGIF-Hydro pathways, defining priorities, tasks, timelines, and responsibilities. This may include, amongst others:
 1. **Harmonization of Guidance:** Review UN-IGIF-Hydro and IHO C-17 publication to identify overlaps and gaps, and recommend improved alignment or consolidation, with outcomes reflected in the joint workplan.
 2. **Methodology and Guidance:** Discuss priorities for developing methods and guidance in collaboration with OGC, ISO/TC 211, UN-GGIM regional and thematic bodies, IHO Regional Hydrographic Committees and related initiatives.
 3. **Policy and Legal Engagement:** Strengthen collaboration with policy and legal communities to ensure robust governance frameworks, improved mutual understanding, and actionable recommendations aligned with national and international obligations.
 4. **Geospatial Capacity Development:** Define next steps for advancing methods, policies and collaborative pilot project for integrating terrestrial and marine geospatial data, particularly for coastal management, [area-based management tools for marine spatial planning](#) and defining protected areas. The next steps will include objectives, partnerships, candidate pilots, guidance requirements, and implementation roadmap.
- c) **Administrative Coordination and Governance:** Operationalize the approved joint structure by clarifying roles, responsibilities, and coordination between the UN-GGIM and IHO Secretariats and co-Chairs.
- d) **Knowledge Exchange:** Share national and regional experiences, good practices, challenges, and needs to support peer learning and identify common gaps.

Collectively, these objectives will support the Joint Working Group in operationalizing its mandate and delivering practical, coordinated outcomes and methods to strengthen integrated marine geospatial information management.

Outcomes

- a) **Agreed Strategic Direction:** A shared vision and set of strategic priorities for the Joint Working Group, aligned with the revised Terms of Reference and global, regional, and national marine geospatial needs.
- b) **Adopted Joint Workplan (2026–2028):** A consolidated and endorsed workplan defining priorities, activities, timelines, and responsibilities.
- c) **Recommendations on Guidance Harmonization and Development:** Clear recommendations on the alignment, cross-referencing, or potential consolidation of the UN-IGIF-Hydro and IHO C-17, with a proposed revision roadmap, and definition of requirements for further guidance and methods.
- d) **Strengthened Policy and Legal Linkages:** Improved collaboration with the policy and legal community and actionable recommendations to support enabling governance and legal



frameworks.

- e) Operationalized Governance Arrangements: Clarified and functioning administrative and coordination mechanisms between the UN-GGIM and IHO Secretariats and Joint WG co-Chairs.
- f) Shared Knowledge and Best Practices: Documented national and regional experiences highlighting progress, challenges, and capacity needs.

Provisional agenda

Date	Session / Item	Details
Monday, 4 May		
08:30 – 10:00	Agenda item #1 - Welcome and introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome remarks by UN-GGIM-IHO Joint Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information (JWGMGI) co-Chairs [and Meeting Host, Hydrographic Department, Royal Thai Navy] • Introductions By UN-GGIM-IHO JWGMGI co-Chairs • Announcements By Hydrographic Department, Royal Thai Navy
	Agenda item #2 - Agenda, organization of the meeting and setting the scene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda and organization of the meeting By JWGMGI co-Chairs • Presentation: Setting the scene By JMGIWG co-Chairs The co-Chairs will outline expectations and desired outcomes for the meeting.
	Agenda item #3 – Updated Working Modalities of the Joint Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated Working Modalities of the JWGMGI by Joint Secretariats
10:00 – 10:30	Group Photograph Break	
10:30 – 12:00	Agenda item #4 - Reports, highlights, updates and considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report of the co-Chair on the UN-GGIM Working Group on Marine Geospatial Information: activities and progress [from 2024-2025] Dr Parry Oei • Report of the UN-GGIM Secretariat including on the programme of work of the Committee of Experts [GGIM/UNSD] • Report of the co-Chair on the IHO Marine Spatial Data Infrastructure Working Group’s activities and progress [from 2024-2025] Ms Caitlin Johnson • Report of the IHO Secretariat including on the programme of work [IHO Secretariat]
	Lunch break	
13:30 - 15:00	Agenda item #5 – Increasing the relevance of UN-IGIF-Hydro and C-17 through regular review and updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Joint Working Group’s activities including current frameworks and methods, in particular the UN-IGIF-Hydro and IHO C-17 to support member states in their national marine geospatial information management and capacities or their national hydrographic and oceanographic program.
	Break	
15:30. – 17:00	Agenda item #5 - Increasing the relevance of UN-IGIF-Hydro and C-17 through regular review and updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Joint Working Group’s activities including current frameworks and methods, in particular the UN-IGIF-Hydro and IHO C-17 to support member states in their national marine geospatial information management and capacities or their national hydrographic and oceanographic program.



Tuesday, 5 May

8:30 – 10:00	Agenda item #6 - Expanding the availability and accessibility of marine geospatial information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report of the co-Chairs on their respective Working Group's activities and progress Report of the Secretariat including the programme of work of Committee of Experts and latest decisions (GGIM/UNSD) Administration coordination between UN-GGIM and IHO Secretariats
Break		
10:30 – 12:00	Agenda item #7 - Strengthening collaboration, partnerships, engagement and capacity development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations on ongoing partnership, collaboration, engagement and capacity development requirements and efforts and discuss the activities and guidance that the Joint Working Group needs to undertake as part of its functions in data accessibility, capacity development and knowledge exchange as established in the Terms of Reference. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development b. the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction c. International agreements (UNCLOS and BBNJ) d. UN Oceans and the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development e. ABLOS f. Young marine geospatial professionals
Lunch break		
13:30 - 15:00	Agenda item #8 - Strategic Vision for the Joint Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group session towards an agreement on the strategic priorities and goals of the Joint Working Group according to the objectives and functions of the Terms of Reference.
Break		
15:30 – 17:00	Agenda item #8 - Strategic Vision for the Joint Working Group	<i>Ibid</i>

Wednesday, 6 May

8:30 – 10:00	Agenda item #9 – Implementation of frameworks, guidance technical standards, National Reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National reports including related to the implementation UN-IGIF-Hydro, IHO C-17 and related Marine Geospatial Information and policy and legal frameworks and guidance
Break		
10:30 – 12:00	Agenda item #9 – Implementation of frameworks, guidance technical standards, Reports from standards organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards development organizations and innovation labs perspectives on methods and guidance: achievements and gaps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. ISO Technical Committee 211 b. Open Geospatial Consortium c. IHO-Singapore Innovation and Technology Laboratory
Lunch break		
13:30 - 15:00	Agenda item #9 - Implementation of frameworks, guidance technical standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations and perspectives on the developments in seabed mapping, marine spatial data infrastructures, hydrography and digital twins of the ocean to identify opportunities for collaboration on new technologies and data integration
Break		
15:30 – 17:00	Agenda item #9 - Implementation of frameworks, guidance technical standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group discussions on data standards, frameworks and interoperability and the alignment between geospatial information frameworks, hydrographic standards, and related metadata.



Thursday, 7 May		
8:30 – 10:00	Agenda item #10 – Preparation of the Joint Workplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions from the meeting including the ongoing activities, partnership and strategic priorities to agree on key thematic areas for collaboration in including data integration of the marine and terrestrial domains, standards and interoperability, capacity development, and emerging technologies
Break		
10:30 – 12:00	Agenda item #10 – Preparation of the Joint Workplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentations and discussions on specific actions, joint initiatives or outputs that the Working Group could undertake in the coming period Standards development organizations and innovation labs perspectives on methods and guidance: achievements and gaps <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ISO Technical Committee 211 Open Geospatial Consortium IHO-Singapore Innovation and Technology Laboratory
Lunch break		
13:30 – 15:00	Agenda item #10 – Preparation of the Joint Workplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions and group sessions on the developments in seabed mapping, marine spatial data infrastructures, hydrography and digital twins of the ocean and identify opportunities for collaboration on new technologies, methods, standards and data integration
15:00 – 15:30	Break	
15:30 – 17:00	Agenda item #10 – Preparation of the Joint Workplan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation and discussions on current standards, data frameworks and interoperability and the alignment between hydrographic standards, geospatial information frameworks and metadata.
Friday, 8 May		
8:30 – 10:00	Agenda item #11 – Review of the draft Strategic vision, workplan and report of the Joint Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group discussions and session on finalizing the Joint Group vision, workplan, coordination mechanism and joint/reporting to respective governing bodies, and review of the report of the meeting.
Break		
10:30 – 12:00	Agenda item #12 – Reporting to the sixteenth session of the Committee of Experts, 6–8 August 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation on the upcoming reporting and related timeline for the sixteenth session of the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (GGIM/UNSD)
	Agenda item #13 – Reporting to the eighteen meeting of IHO IRCC, 16 – 18 June 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation on the upcoming reporting and related timeline of the IHO Inter-Regional Coordination Committee.
	Agenda item #14 – Next steps, summary and close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary by the Joint Secretariats Closing remarks by the Co-Chairs

Organizers

This expert meeting is organized jointly by the Global Geospatial Information Management Section of the Statistics Division (DESA) and the IHO Secretariat, in cooperation with the Hydrographic Department, Royal Thai Navy (HDRTN) in Thailand. The Joint Working Group is co-chaired by representatives from UN-GGIM and IHO, who will jointly preside over the sessions.



Language

This expert consultation and meeting will be conducted in English.

Participation

Members of the UN-GGIM and IHO Joint WG-MGI, comprising expert representatives nominated by UN Member States from all regions, along with members of the IHO community. Observers from relevant international organizations and other UN-GGIM Working Groups may attend to contribute expertise. Total attendance is expected to be around 50–60 experts.

Meeting Venue

The meeting will be held from 4 to 8 May 2026 at the Kantary Hills Hotel in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The Government of Thailand, Technical and Foreign Relations Section, Hydrographic Department, Royal Thai Navy has offered to host, and detailed logistical information will be provided separately.

Dates

The dates for this event are 4–8 May 2026 (a five-day meeting).

Logistical Information

Local logistical information and arrangements will be provided separately via e-mail, when information is made available by the local organizers.

Health and Safety

Participants are responsible for making their own inoculations and medical/health insurance arrangements, including life, health, medical evacuations and treatments, and other forms deemed appropriate. The organizers and the United Nations do not take responsibility for the ill health of any participants during their travel to and stay in Chiang Mai, Thailand. For a safe meeting environment, any prevailing local government measures related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) at the time of the meeting shall apply.

Points of Contact

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