

United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information  
Management (UN-GGIM)

**Report of the Virtual Meeting of the Expanded Bureau of UN-GGIM**

Thursday, 14 May 2020

08:00am – 10:00am EDT

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## 1. Welcome and introductions

The UN-GGIM Expanded Bureau was welcomed by Mr. Stefan Schweinfest (Director of the United Nations Statistics Division - UNSD). He thanked the Expanded Bureau (participants detailed in Annex 1) for meeting virtually, as the planned physical meeting of the Expanded Bureau in Windsor, United Kingdom on the margins of the Sixth High-Level Forum on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management, was unable to proceed due to the Covid-19 global pandemic.

Following introductions, the Expanded Bureau agreed to the proposed Agenda (Annex 2).

## 2. Update on preparations and modalities for the Tenth Session of UN-GGIM

### Proposed modality for the tenth session

Mr. Schweinfest provided an assessment on the convening of the tenth session of UN-GGIM, recalling a virtual meeting of the UN-GGIM Bureau on 7 May 2020 which considered a number of alternatives (Annex 3). The Bureau had considered these options and unanimously decided that *“Option 3: Convene a virtual ‘hybrid’ tenth session at the end of August/early September 2020”* was the most viable option to ensure that momentum of the global work of UN-GGIM is maintained, and the opportunities for experts from capitals to participate and engage is not compromised.

The Bureau agreed that the tenth session of UN-GGIM could consist of 3 virtual meetings, each of 2 hours duration, tentatively on 26 and 27 August and 4 September 2020. The next steps would include the Bureau requesting ECOSOC to consider and endorse this revised modality.

Mr. Schweinfest highlighted the implications<sup>1</sup> of this decision that included:

- each ‘day’ of the session (originally 2 meetings of 3 hours each over 3 days) will be reduced to a single 2-hour virtual meeting;
- a loss of the dynamics of ‘in-person’ interactions, conversations and interventions;
- the need for the virtual meetings of the tenth session to be well prepared, including its documentation;
- a modality for the submission of written statements/interventions from experts from Member States and relevant observers;

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<sup>1</sup> “Draft Proposal for the Tenth Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management” circulated to the Expanded Bureau prior to the meeting

- to ensure optimal corresponding local times given the range of time zones; and
- for some participants, connectivity and bandwidth issues will remain.

In explaining the deferment towards the end of August, this will allow Member States to provide written statements/interventions for each of the technical reports on the Committee's Agenda, and ensure the availability of all statements/interventions online for Member States to review prior to the commencement of the session. It is envisaged that the revised modality:

- will approximate the 'in-person' interventions and reactions;
- may mitigate connectivity and bandwidth issues;
- promote participation and engagement by as many as possible, fostering inclusive deliberations; and
- may lead to greater engagement and consultation within the regions and sub-regions to coordinate regional or sub-regional positions and views.

The organisation of work for this agreed approach will require an understanding of which Agenda items will be considered for 'decision' and which will only be for 'information'. The Committee will need to focus on the items requiring decision while having the opportunity to recognise and note the significant progress of other areas of its work programme. It was noted that the website for the tenth session of UN-GGIM will need to be the main communication channel for communication in the lead up to, and during the session.

The Expanded Bureau endorsed the decision of the Bureau, and made some additional observations:

- Ms. Rosamond Bing noted that connectivity, bandwidth and translation may be an issue for some Member States, but there is a need to maintain momentum given the progress across a number of work items of the Committee;
- Ms. Paloma Merodio enquired whether a suitable technology platform is available, and concurred over the issues of connectivity and bandwidth. Volunteered to provide inputs on suitability of the technology.
- Mr. Schweinfest confirmed the ongoing discussion with Conference Management Services, that a technology platform had been decided, noted there could be an experimental element, stressed the desire to provide simultaneous translation, but is yet unclear. However using written submissions could help bridge some of these issues;
- Mr. Abbas Rajabifard expressed support for the third option, asked about opportunities to organize a virtual forum, highlighting that the UN-GGIM Academic Network and Geospatial Societies had initiated discussions to collaborate on a forum during the tenth session.
- Mr. Schweinfest expressed the desire for a modality to allow some groups to socialize some aspects of the agenda;
- Mr. Tomaž Petek, noted that the "hybrid" approach is still complex, but a feasible way to address the current situation;

- Ms. Alison Rose expressed support for the “hybrid” approach and suggested testing the technology platform ahead of the session;
- Mr. Schweinfest noted that the proposed timeline for the tenth session is still tentative, and the organization of work will need to be reviewed and reorganized to prioritize certain items on the Agenda to fit the condensed session. The Bureau may propose and consider which Agenda items are to be for discussion or information;
- Mr. Fernand Isseri offered some practical initial suggestions to prioritize certain items;
- The matter of the geospatial response to the Covid-19 pandemic was raised, including how this matter may be considered at the tenth session;
- Mr. Bandar Almuslmani suggested that side events and preparatory meetings may be convened in advance of the tenth session to assist in the conduct of the virtual sessions; and
- Mr. Schweinfest noted the unanimous support to proceed with the tenth session with a revised modality as proposed.

The UN-GGIM Bureau will engage, separately, the co-Chairs of UN-GGIM’s Subcommittee, Expert and Working Groups, to discuss the proposed revised modality and implications on the activities and reporting of these groups.

The UN-GGIM Bureau will formally approach (through a letter) ECOSOC to request the proposed change to the modality for the convening of the tenth session.

### **Provisional Agenda for the tenth session**

Mr. Petek and Ms. Rose expressed their support for the draft Provisional Agenda, which was considered. The Provisional Agenda for the tenth session was agreed by the Expanded Bureau, and will thus be submitted to OUSG for review before being sent for editing and translation.

Mr. Schweinfest expressed his appreciation for the support for the revised modality and the Provisional Agenda for the tenth session.

## **3. Brief overview of the Virtual High-Level Forum**

Mr Greg Scott noted that a series of Virtual High-Level Forum Events on United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management<sup>2</sup> is to be convened on 26 May, 2 and 9 June 2020 by UNSD and Ordnance Survey of Great Britain at 11:00 hrs (UTC):

1. 26 May: The Geospatial Landscape, and overview of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, and the Future Trends in Geospatial Information Management;

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<sup>2</sup> [http://ggim.un.org/meetings/2020/Virtual\\_HLF](http://ggim.un.org/meetings/2020/Virtual_HLF)

2. 2 June: Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, the nine strategic pathways and country-level action plans
3. 9 June: Future Trends in Geospatial Information Management: Five to Ten-year Vision, the relevance and application to national priorities and action plans

He further noted that these three events are a platform for launching the report on Future Trends and the Implementation Guide of the IGIF.

#### 4. Update on Global Consultations

Mr. Scott highlighted the three global consultations that the Secretariat had or currently administering:

1. The Framework for Effective Land Administration, following consensus on its development by the Expert Group on Land Administration and Management, closed on 2 March 2020;
2. The Implementation Guide of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF), in which most chapters have been released, the global consultation is ongoing; and
3. The report on Future Trends in Geospatial Information Management: the five to ten year vision (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), the global consultation and review is ongoing.

The ensuing discussion noted:

- Mr. Scott highlighted that the Secretariat is cognisant that UN-GGIM is asking a lot of its global community this year, especially with these global consultations, noting that this demonstrates the extent of the work programme and progress; and
- Mr Petek supported the overall process and highlighting the immense interest from UN-GGIM Europe on these consultations. He requested an extension of time for the review of the IGIF considering its depth and interest.

#### 5. Process for seeking expressions of interest for hosting the Second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC)

Mr Schweinfest recalled the UNWGIC in Deqing and the Moganshan Declaration<sup>3</sup> which called for *“a second UNWGIC be convened in four years’ time to consider and stimulate global geospatial development progress”*. He noted the need for a mechanism to reach out and feel the pulse for any interest to host the next congress. Mr. Scott reiterated the need to establish a process, given the modality for hosting the UNWGIC was not in place with the first event. The Bureau agreed that a more formal process would be needed, and the proposal is about establishing the needed process. Mr. Schweinfest noted the desire to have an open, as practical as it is possible, mechanism offering opportunities for countries to express interest and to host. This will establish a blueprint for future iterations of the Congress.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://ggim.un.org/unwgic/documents/Moganshan\\_Declaration\\_Draft\\_Final.pdf](https://ggim.un.org/unwgic/documents/Moganshan_Declaration_Draft_Final.pdf)

- Ms. Merodio appreciated that this matter is brought to the Bureau and the Expanded Bureau, and noted the need to consider the rhythm of the High Level Forum and the Congress, and to be open in the process. She also noted having a Congress in 2022 would be valuable. She opined that the approach is right, to proceed and UN-GGIM Americas will support with exploring the options;
- Ms. Alison Rose welcomed the development of the process but highlighted the need for flexibility in timelines in view of the current situation;
- Mr. Schweinfest noted that there will be a 2-step process: first an expression of interest to host the UNWGIC; and, secondly a formal proposal, which would require more detailed consideration.

The Expanded Bureau agreed with the approach and that the current timeline be used to explore and request expressions of interest to host the second UNWGIC in 2022.

## 6. Round table updates on Regional and Thematic Activities

This segment provided updates on UN-GGIM activities, events, and interactions, including updates on key initiatives of Regional Committees and thematic networks, and engagement with UN Regional Commissions.

### UN-GGIM Regional Committees

#### *UN-GGIM: Europe*

Mr. Petek noted that the upcoming seventh plenary meeting of UN-GGIM: Europe will be convened virtually on 22-23 June 2020, and highlighted the meeting of the Permanent Committee on Cadastre in the European Union (PCC) in Zagreb, Croatia on 16-17 June 2020. Other regional events will be convened virtually in the coming period. He noted that work is ongoing at the regional level in the working groups.

#### *UN-GGIM: Americas*

Ms. Merodio highlighted the work of CariGEO on the integration of Statistical and Geospatial Information with PAIGH and the US Census Bureau developing a vulnerability index. There is also a Mexico – Chile project on strengthening geospatial information management. Ms. Merodio highlighted the Covid-19 webinar, which was convened on April 8, and noted that there was to be a virtual seminar series with ECLAC, on May 15. The seventh plenary of UN-GGIM: Americas is aimed to be convened virtually on September 7-8 in collaboration with AmeriGEO that may include a joint symposium.

#### *UN-GGIM Asia-Pacific (UN-GGIM-AP)*

Ms. Alison Rose noted that the previous President of UN-GGIM-AP, Mr. Andy Barnicoat, has retired and she has assumed the role. Ms. Rose highlighted the outcomes of the eighth plenary of UN-GGIM-AP convened in Canberra, November 2019. The plenary discussed the Integrated Geospatial

Information Framework (IGIF), the Global Statistical Geospatial Framework (GSGF), the Sendai Framework, and the 2030 Agenda among other relevant topics. UN-GGIM-AP has been engaging with China to convene a seminar on geospatial information, but this has been delayed due to Covid-19. Moreover, they are supporting a project for the development of a regional datahub for the SDGs. The next plenary meeting is planned to be convened in Bali, but the Regional Committee may need to consider an alternative to meeting physically.

#### *UN-GGIM: Africa*

Mr. Oumar Ka highlighted regional development workshops which had been convened in East and West Africa and two consultative expert meetings on the IGIF in Addis Ababa. Mr. Ka noted that UN-GGIM Africa's fifth plenary, convened on the margins of AfricaGIS in Rwanda, Kigali, from 18-22 November 2019, received a good level of participation, including from Digital Earth Africa and GEO, and the broader UN-GGIM community. He also highlighted the African Dashboard on Covid-19 and the regional webinar on "Covid-19: Strategies for a Geospatial Response in Africa" which was convened on 13 May 2020.

#### *UN-GGIM: Arab-States*

Mr. Bandar Almuslmani noted that UN-GGIM: Arab States convened its seventh plenary meeting on 17 -19 February 2020, which was attended by 14 countries. The meeting enabled the review and adoption of the Regional Committee's working group's strategic objectives and plans. A workshop on IGIF was held, and the Regional Committee resolved to encourage the implementation of IGIF in the Arab State. He noted with appreciation, Saudi Arabia and Morocco readiness to translate the IGIF implementation guide into Arabic, and to Kuwait for the GSGF.

### **UN-GGIM Thematic Groups**

#### *UN-GGIM: Geospatial Societies*

Mr. Menno-Jan Kraak informed that a number of the Geospatial Societies had postponed their annual conferences in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. He also noted that they have been liaising with the Academic and United Nations Geospatial Network on how to collaborate more.

#### *UN-GGIM: Academic Network*

Mr. Rajabifard detailed the various efforts of the UN-GGIM: Academic Network, including the preparation of a book on the Covid-19 Pandemic and Community Resilience, and collaborations with the other thematic networks of UN-GGIM.

#### *UN-GGIM: United Nations Geospatial Network (UNGN)*

Mr. Czarán, responding on behalf of Mr. Alex Caldas (Chair of the UNGN), detailed the ongoing work of the UNGN in developing a Blueprint Report and Landscape Analysis of the geospatial activities within the United Nations; raising awareness of the UNGN within the United Nations System and towards expanding the membership of the UNGN, which currently stands at 30 entities of the United Nations.

## 7. Ongoing work of the Subcommittee on Geodesy including an update regarding its Position Paper on Governance and the proposed Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence

Mr. Schweinfest highlighted the ongoing work of the Subcommittee on Geodesy (SCoG), noting the progress towards the implementing the General Assembly resolution, but hampered by the lack of resources. He announced that the German Government has expressed interest to establish a Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence in Bonn, Germany, and their intention to bring the offer to the tenth session for the formal consideration of UN-GGIM.

Mr. Schweinfest encouraged Regional Committees to consider this development and stressed the Centre is meant to address needs including that of the regions. Mr. Scott highlighted that the SCoG Bureau is presently working on its position paper on sustaining the GGRF and the Concept Paper on the establishment of a GGCE.

## 8. AOB

### Composition of the Bureau

Mr. Scott detailed that the Bureau will need to be elected at the tenth session, composing of three co-Chairs and one Rapporteur, and offered appreciation to the regional commissions for their support in the organisation of a series of webinars on Covid-19, stressing that it has been an enabling mechanism for bringing together the global geospatial community.

Mr Schweinfest brought the meeting to a close, thanking the Expanded Bureau for their participation.

## 9. Annex 1: Participants

1. Mr. Fernand Guy Isseri, Co-Chair UN-GGIM, Cameroon
2. Ms. Rosamond Bing, Co-Chair UN-GGIM, Tonga
3. Ms. Macarena Perez, Rapporteur UN-GGIM, Chile
4. Ms. Alison Rose, President, UN-GGIM-AP, Australia
5. Ms. Paloma Merodio Gómez, President, UN-GGIM: Americas, Mexico
6. Mr. Oumar Ka, Chair, UN-GGIM: Africa, Senegal
7. Mr. Tomaž Petek, Chair, UN-GGIM: Europe, Slovenia
8. Mr. Bandar Almusmani, Chair, UN-GGIM: Arab States, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
9. Mr. Menno-Jann Kraak, Chair, UN-GGIM: Geospatial Societies
10. Mr. Abbas Rajabifard, Chair, UN-GGIM: Academic Network
11. Mr. Lorant Czarán, Co-Vice Chair, UN-GGIM: United Nations Geospatial Network
12. Ms. Gabrelia Seco, Secretary of UN-GGIM: Americas
13. Ms. Carol Aguis, Secretary of UN-GGIM: Europe
14. Mr. Keran Wang, UNESCAP
15. Mr. Tae Hyung Kim, UNESCAP
16. Ms. Verena Kausche, UNESCAP
17. Mr. Andre Nonguierma, UNECA
18. Mr. Steven Vale, UNECE
19. Mr. Rolando Ocampo, UNECLAC
20. Mr. Alvaro Monnett, UNECLAC
21. Mr. Stefan Schweinfest, Director, United Nations Statistics Division, DESA
22. Mr. Greg Scott, Global Geospatial Information Management Section, United Nations Statistics Division, DESA
23. Mr. CheeHai Teo, Global Geospatial Information Management Section, United Nations Statistics Division, DESA
24. Ms. Linda Hooper, Office of the Director, United Nations Statistics Division, DESA
25. Ms. Cecille Blake, Global Geospatial Information Management Section, United Nations Statistics Division, DESA
26. Mr. Mark Iliffe, Global Geospatial Information Management Section, United Nations Statistics Division, DESA
27. Ms. Vilma Frani, Global Geospatial Information Management Section, United Nations Statistics Division, DESA
28. Ms. Ayako Kagawa, Geospatial Information Section, Office of Information Communication Technology
29. Mr. Guillaume Le Sourd, Geospatial Information Section, Office of Information Communication Technology

## 10. Annex 2: Proposed Agenda

1. Brief Welcome and Introductions.
2. Update on preparations and modalities for the Tenth Session of UN-GGIM, including approval of the Provisional Agenda.
3. Brief overview of the Virtual High Level Forum, now finally confirmed to be convened 26 May, 2 June and 9 June 2020.
4. Global consultations: Framework on Effective Land Administration (FELA); IGIF Implementation Guide; Future Trends Report.
5. Process for seeking expressions of interest for the Second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC).
6. Ongoing work of the Subcommittee on Geodesy including an update regarding its Governance Paper and proposed Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence.
7. Round the table update on regional and thematic activities.
8. Any other business
  - Responses to COVID-19?
  - UN-GGIM Bureau composition?

## 11. Annex 3: Alternative Options for Convening the Tenth Session of UN-GGIM

### Option 1: Postpone the tenth session to a later date to be determined

The first two weeks of January 2021 could be the earliest opportunity to convene the postponed tenth session physically, but this cannot be guaranteed. Many intergovernmental bodies have postponed their meetings and are looking for ‘first-opportunity’ to convene their delayed meetings. Potentially some ‘momentum’ could also be lost, and the ‘what if’ remains for the tenth session, should it not be convened in January 2021. The annual calendar of work would also be out of sync.

### Option 2: Keep the dates of 5-7 August 2020, and convene a virtual meeting

This option would keep the same dates (5-7 August 2020) but the meetings of the tenth session will be held virtually. There is the need to consider technological challenges, including simultaneous interpretation, internet connectivity/bandwidth, notwithstanding the time differences and the corresponding local time. The preparation of reports and submission of statements from countries would also be condensed.

### Option 3: Convene a virtual ‘hybrid’ tenth session at the end of August/early September 2020

This ‘hybrid’ approach would entail 3 condensed virtual meetings of the tenth session, comprising 2 hours each day (instead of the usual 6 hours per day) on Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 August, and Friday 4 September. This will accommodate almost all time zones globally, but the issue of connectivity and internet bandwidth remains. Hence, the question whether there can be inclusive discussions needed to be considered. The proposed delay to the end of August provides the opportunity for Member States and relevant invited observers to provide written statements/interventions, in lieu of the oral interventions at a physical meeting, and which will be available online. These statements/interventions will be reviewed before the virtual meetings of the tenth session to understand the issues and inform the condensed agenda.

The virtual meetings of the tenth session, shortened to 2 hours over 3 meetings, will address key issues before the decisions are delivered for each of the agenda items considered. The first 2 virtual meetings could be scheduled on Wednesday 26 and Thursday 27 August, and would comprise the usual discussion and information agenda items. Then we would ‘break for a week’, commencing again on Friday 4 September. In the intervening period, the Secretariat will compile and send out the draft decisions as quickly as possible, request participants to make specific amendments or proposals by Wednesday 2 September, and then on Friday 4 September we would just have one final agenda item, which is the adoption of the report. The Secretariat would present a ‘bracketed’ version of the draft decisions (with all the comments received) and the Committee would have the 2 hour session available to agree and decide on the appropriate final language for the decisions. The “informal” adoption of the report would occur on Friday 4 September. This would then initiate a ‘silence procedure’ for the formal ‘adoption’ of the report 24 hours later.

With provision for written statements/interventions and posting these online, this ‘hybrid’ approach would provide opportunities for many to intervene and contribute to the deliberations and decisions, addressing issues of connectivity/bandwidth, non-optimal corresponding local times and inclusive discussions.