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## Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management

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Item 9 of the provisional agenda\*

### Application of geospatial information related to land administration and management

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### Note by the Secretariat

#### Summary

The present paper contains the report of the Expert Group on Land Administration and Management for consideration by the Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management.

At its ninth session, held in New York from 7 to 9 August 2019, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 9/107, in which it noted the continued efforts of the Expert Group to advocate and raise awareness of the merits and benefits of effective and efficient land administration and management by formulating overarching policy guidance that could be referenced by Member States with regard to the relationship between people and land. The Committee welcomed the efforts by the Expert Group to align with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework and the elaboration of the nine strategic pathways of the Framework as they applied to the land sector. In connection with formulating the framework for effective land administration, the Committee welcomed the inclusion of appropriate globally agreed concepts and approaches, requested the Expert Group to promote the use of applicable internationally agreed standards and recognized the need to respect the inherent rights of indigenous peoples to their lands, territories and resources, as well as traditions and customs. In this present report, the Expert Group provides information on its activities, including its progress in formulating the draft framework for effective land administration, and the subsequent broad global consultation process undertaken with Member States and relevant stakeholders. The framework, with its nine pathways aligned with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, is aimed at providing the reference and guidance for Member States when establishing, strengthening, coordinating and monitoring their land administration nationally or subnationally. In that regard, the Expert Group has completed, for consideration and adoption by the Committee of Experts, the framework for effective land administration, which is provided as a background document to the report. In addition, the Expert Group discusses mechanisms to leverage the Implementation Guide of the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework as a reference resource for Governments to assess, design, plan, implement and maintain effective land administration in such a way that positive transformational change and benefits are enabled, visible and sustainable.

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\* E/C.20/2020/20

## I. Introduction

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. When realized, the lives of all will be profoundly improved, and the world transformed for the better. Considering that the greater majority of humanity do not enjoy secure land and property rights, to create sustainable and inclusive societies, there is a need to accelerate efforts to document, record and recognize people to land relationships in all forms, ensuring that no one is left behind.
2. At its ninth session, held in New York from 7 to 9 August 2019, the Committee of Experts adopted decision 9/107, in which it noted the continued efforts of the Expert Group to advocate and raise awareness of the merits and benefits of effective and efficient land administration and management; and welcomed the efforts to align with the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (IGIF), including the elaboration of the nine strategic pathways of the Framework as they applied to the land sector.
3. In the intersessional period, the Expert Group has continued efforts to advocate and raise awareness of the merits and benefits of effective and efficient land administration and management by formulating overarching policy guidance aligned with the IGIF. This overarching policy guidance, with nine pathways aligned to the IGIF, seeks to provide the reference and guidance for Member States with regard to administering the relationships between people and land, and when establishing, strengthening, co-ordinating and monitoring their land administration nationally or sub-nationally.
4. In formulating the overarching policy guidance, the Expert Group considered and included appropriate globally agreed concepts and approaches, promoted the use of applicable internationally agreed standards, and recognized the need to respect the inherent rights of indigenous peoples to their lands, territories and resources, as well as traditions and customs for effectively and efficiently relate people to land through the documenting, recording and recognizing people to land relationships in all forms towards securing land and property rights for all.
5. Land administration relates people to land and informs on the ‘how’, the ‘what’, the ‘who’, the ‘when’ and the ‘where’ of land tenure, land use, land value, and land development. Land administration systems are the basis for recording the complex range of rights, restrictions and responsibilities related to people, policies and places. Effective land administration must be fit-for-purpose, appropriate and adequate, interoperable and sustainable, flexible and inclusive, and able to accelerate efforts to document, record, recognize, and monitor people to land relationships, in all forms. Effective land administration provides humanity with better access to and security of land and property rights, noting that not all actors can be satisfied with every land administration decision, is able to mitigate issues relating to land as a root cause triggering conflict, and supports leaving no one behind - the commitment of the 2030 Agenda.
6. In this present report, the Expert Group informs the Committee of Experts on its progress in formulating the overarching policy guidance, and the subsequent broad global consultation process undertaken with Member States and relevant stakeholders. In this regard, the Expert Group has completed, for consideration and adoption by the Committee of Experts, the Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA), which is provided as a background document to this report.
7. This present report also provides information and updates the Committee of the Expert Group’s activities during this reporting period. The Committee of Experts is invited to take note of the report, consider the Framework for Effective Land Administration for adoption, and express its views on the Expert Group’s activities, progress and proposed next steps. Points for discussion and decision are provided in paragraph 38.

## II. Membership and activities

8. During this reporting period, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates joined the Expert Group. This represented a significant additional regional participation and contribution. The Expert Group presently comprises expert representatives from 26 Member States, four from the UN System, and seven from relevant organizations from the Committee of Experts' stakeholder community.

9. Prior to the ninth session, Suriname had requested to step down as co-Chair of the Expert Group after a valuable one year contribution. Guyana has subsequently agreed to replace Suriname as co-Chair of the Expert Group for the remaining three-year period. The Netherlands is serving its second three-year period as a co-Chair. The Expert Group expressed its sincere appreciation and thanks to Suriname for its leadership as a co-Chair.

10. The Expert Group organized a side event on the margins of the ninth session of the Committee of Experts. The side event informed and engaged delegates of the Expert Group's efforts to formulate the overarching policy guidance aligned with the IGIF. At the side event, presenters, panellists and participants interacted, considered and discussed the draft FELA, and organized around four sub-themes: i) governance, institutions and accountability, and legal and policy; ii) financial and data; iii) innovation and standards; and iv) partnerships, capacity and education, and advocacy and awareness. The side event considered the pathways to effective land administration, and contributed to further improvement in the formulation of the draft FELA.

11. The Expert Group has conducted its business electronically during this reporting period, including for the discussion, formulation and development of the draft FELA. In this regard, the Expert Group convened three online Expert Group meetings: its fifth on 23 September 2019; its sixth on 29 May 2020; and its seventh on 30 June 2020. During the fifth online meeting, the Expert Group discussed and considered the comments, feedback and additional inputs provided by the Expert Group, and invited expert reviewers to contribute to the formulation and development of the draft FELA. The Expert Group subsequently agreed, with additional refinement, to proceed with the broad global consultation process involving Member States and relevant stakeholders. The global consultation process commenced on 16 December 2019 and was concluded on 2 March 2020.

12. At the conclusion of the broad global consultation, and following an iterative process with multiple reviews and edits, the co-Chairs presented the consolidated final draft of the FELA to the Expert Group at its sixth online meeting. The Expert Group further reviewed the final draft, appreciating the rigor of the review and refinement process, and unanimously agreed that the completed FELA be forwarded to the Committee of Experts for adoption at its tenth session. The Expert Group expressed appreciation for all the contributions, comments feedback, and suggestions to the draft FELA from the global consultation involving Member States and relevant stakeholders.

13. The Expert Group, at its seventh online meeting, expressed appreciation for the translation of the consultation draft FELA by Chile, supported by Spain. This translation had contributed considerably to the global consultation process. The Expert Group welcomed further volunteered efforts from Member States to translate the FELA into languages other than English. The Expert Group also discussed next steps and the implementation of the FELA, and in the process, reviewed the work plan of the Expert Group with a view to update its activities and tasks for the next two years.

14. The Expert Group had planned and begun organizing its third formal Expert Group meeting from 10 to 12 May 2020, and to be hosted by The Netherlands in Amsterdam. This physical meeting was to be held in conjunction with the 2020 Working Week of the International Federation of Surveyors (FIG) hosted by The Netherlands Cadastre, Land

Registry and Mapping Agency from 10 to 14 May 2020. FIG is a member of the Expert Group. Arising from the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic, together with the host, it was decided that this Expert Group meeting be postponed until the global situation permits.

15. A representative of the Expert Group was invited to, and participated in, the eighth plenary meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Asia and the Pacific (UN-GGIM-AP) from 3 to 5 November 2019 in Canberra, Australia. The draft FELA and its global consultation process, together with the work and activities of the Expert Group, were presented and discussed at the plenary meeting and also with UN-GGIM-AP's Working Group on Cadastre and Land Management. The Netherlands co-Chair participated in the fourth International Workshop on Operationalizing the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework from 15 to 16 February 2020, and the seventh plenary meeting of the Regional Committee of United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management for Arab States (UN GGIM: Arab States) from 17 – 19 February 2020 in Algiers, Algeria. Again, the draft FELA and its rationale was presented, as well as the activities of the Expert Group. Member States of UN-GGIM: Arab States were encouraged to review and contribute to the global consultation process on the draft FELA. These engagements allowed for exchanges and interactions on the draft FELA, and raised the awareness, advocacy, importance, merits and benefits of effective and efficient land administration and management.

16. Members of the Expert Group also contributed to the development of the implementation guide of the IGIF. This included participating in expert consultations and meetings convened by the Secretariat of the Committee of Experts on the development of the implementation guide. The Expert Group had recognized the need for coordination and coherence in operationalizing the IGIF, and to advance nationally integrated geospatial information management, including as it applies to land administration and management, and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

### **III. Broad global consultation on the Framework for Effective Land Administration**

17. The Committee of Experts, at its ninth session in August 2019, in adopting decision 9/107, noted the considerable progress and efforts of the Expert Group towards formulating and developing a framework for effective land administration, and requested the Expert Group to initiate and undertake a broad global consultation process on the draft FELA involving Member States and relevant stakeholders.

18. After the ninth session, the views and guidance from the Committee of Experts were considered, together with additional contributions from the Expert Group and some invited external expert reviewers. The Expert Group, with a group of expert reviewers, contributed a total of 279 individual comments and additional inputs. These contributions were extensively reviewed and addressed by the Expert Group. At its fifth online meeting (23 September 2019), the Expert Group then agreed to finalize the draft FELA, and to subject the draft to broad global consultation involving Member States and relevant stakeholders.

19. The broad global consultation process commenced on 16 December 2019 and concluded on 2 March 2020. At the close of the global consultation process, 66 responses and contributions from Member States and relevant stakeholders were received. Of the 66 responses, 46 were provided by 45 Member States from all regions and development context. A further 20 were provided from relevant stakeholders that included groups of the Committee of Experts, the United Nations system, and international and regional organizations. The responses yielded 266 individual comments, feedback and suggestions. All were consolidated into a single document to support the subsequent review and refinement process. In addition, many of the responses acknowledged the efforts by the Expert Group to formulate and develop

the FELA, recognized the importance of effective land administration, including for achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs), and had generally expressed support for the FELA.

20. The review and refinement process was carried out meticulously and respectfully, and each individual contribution considered and addressed accordingly. The aim was to complete the FELA as a broad, inclusive and enabling Framework. The process sought to be respectful to the rich and valued contributions from Member States and relevant stakeholders. This involved at least two reviews, independent of each other, for each comment and suggestion and, when necessary, a third review carried out, all to ensure agreement and consensus. It should be noted that the majority of the contributions were accommodated with better use of language, terminology and phrasing when refining the Framework document.

21. The Expert Group had to address four major considerations: i) whether to use ‘land administration and management’ instead of ‘land administration’ for the title and where appropriate within the Framework document; ii) to improve the structure and flow of the Framework document, and to improve its readability; iii) the inclusion of a forward-facing paragraph within the conclusion section and to note the need to support its implementation; and iv) to address the definition and scope of ‘effective land administration’. All of these were carefully considered and addressed in the completed FELA.

22. It was agreed that the final title for the overarching policy guidance be the *Framework for Effective Land Administration* and to keep the phrase ‘effective land administration’ in the Framework document as appropriate. However, this has to be accompanied by carefully defining land administration and effective land administration within the FELA. The overall organization of the FELA was modified to improve the flow, presentation and readability of the document as a whole. New diagrams were prepared, and some existing diagrams revised as a consequence. A new forward-facing paragraph was included and ‘effective land administration’ defined, scoped and clarified.

#### **IV. Framework for Effective Land Administration**

23. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a global plan of action for people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. If realized, lives will be profoundly improved, and the world transformed for the better. Considering that the greater majority of humanity do not enjoy secure land rights, to create sustainable and inclusive societies, there is a need to accelerate efforts to document, record and recognize people to land relationships in all forms. The Expert Group recognized this urgent need, cognizant of the diverse social, environmental, and economic circumstances, at national and sub-national levels.

24. When a large proportion of humanity do not enjoy recorded land and property rights, there is an urgent need to accelerate efforts to document, record and recognize people to land relationships in all their forms. This land administration gap occurs within increasingly stressed and integrated global and national contexts regarding social, environmental and economic sustainability. People to land relationships cut directly and indirectly across all the SDGs. The integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda demand effective land administration, realized through integrated geospatial information management, for land policies, land tenure, land value, land use, and land development.

25. Land administration relates people to land and informs on the ‘how’, the ‘what’, the ‘who’, the ‘when’ and the ‘where’ of land tenure, land use, land value, and land development. Land administration is considered responsible if it continuously aligns processes and resources with dynamic societal demands. Land administration systems are the basis for recording the complex range of rights, restrictions and responsibilities related to people, policies and places. And the term ‘land’ should be interpreted in the broad sense, also including water bodies (rivers, lakes, seas, oceans) and spaces above and below the surface, that is, air space and subsurface spaces.

26. Effective land administration caters to all people, and must:
- (a) Develop confidence and trust, promote security, safety, peace and peace building;
  - (b) Accelerate the proportion of population with tenure security;
  - (c) Allow economic development by supporting land value capture revenue systems that are equitable and transparent;
  - (d) Strengthen multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral participation to achieve integrated geospatial information;
  - (e) Contribute to smart and resilient rural and urban societies, with equitable spatial/land-use planning, and land development;
  - (f) Ensure participatory and inclusive land use and use planning;
  - (g) Promote the recognition of the inherent rights of indigenous and vulnerable peoples to their lands, territories and resources, and recognize collective traditions, customs and customary tenures, consistent with existing obligations under national and international law;
  - (h) Encourage efficient, sustainable and fair land markets, where appropriate, that take into account land tenure, value, use and land development aspects;
  - (i) Cater to all circumstances, situations and people – in times of peace and prosperity, in times of stress and hardship (including disaster and conflicts, forced migration and human displacement, poverty, food and water scarcity);
  - (j) Promote preparedness and resilience on climate change issues, and support biodiversity, conservation, and ecosystem sustainability; and
  - (k) Enable partnership, bringing and building together knowledge, skills and experiences on land tenure, land value, land use and land development.
27. The completed FELA is provided as a background document to this present report. The overarching goal of the FELA is to support global policy coherence in land administration, with a view to guiding policy development and policy operationalization in Member States with respect to the IGIF for the land sector. The FELA is composed of four parts. The first part describes contextual background and drivers for the FELA. The second part defines effective land administration and how that relates to the SDGs. The third part provides a high-level vision statement, goals, requirements, and outcomes. The fourth part responds to the vision by elaborating on nine pathways for effective land administration and includes a series of priority actions as a guidance for implementation.
28. The nine pathways of the framework for effective land administration as formulated are:
- (a) Governance, institutions and accountability;
  - (b) Policy and legal;
  - (c) Financial;
  - (d) Data;
  - (e) Innovation;
  - (f) Standards;
  - (g) Partnerships;
  - (h) Capacity and education; and
  - (i) Advocacy and awareness.

29. The FELA will leverage the IGIF Implementation Guide as a reference resource that provides information for governments to design, plan, implement and maintain effective land administration in their country in such a way that positive transformational change is enabled, visible and sustainable. The IGIF Implementation Guide provides the specific guidance, options and actions for each of the nine strategic pathways, and equally for the FELA and its nine pathways. This will guide the user through the approach, content, rationale, options, considerations, and principles that align with actions.

30. The vision of the FELA is to secure people to land relationships in all forms for the wellbeing of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnerships. Its mission is to provide leadership, coordination and internationally recognized standards, and support responsible innovation and partnerships, for effective land administration to realize sustainable social, environmental and economic development. The FELA seeks to:

- (a) Implement the Integrated Geospatial Information Framework to the land sector, and support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- (b) Develop a comprehensive vision for understanding, advocating and promoting effective land administration;
- (c) Provide strategic guidance towards country-specific action plans to be prepared and implemented;
- (d) Advocate continuous strengthening of land administration and management procedures, techniques, and tools; and
- (e) Enhance multilateral partnerships through policy discourse or harmonisation for effective land administration with a view to further guiding already existing policies in Member States.

31. The FELA, with its nine pathways, is an overarching policy guide and provides a reference for Member States when establishing, strengthening, coordinating, and monitoring its land administration nationally or sub-nationally, cognizant of national or sub-national priorities and circumstances. It has been formulated and developed for both the developing and developed context. The FELA aligns directly to the overarching and strategic IGIF, and implements the IGIF for the land sector. The nine pathways of the FELA provide a mechanism towards effective leadership, advocacy, mobilization and actions to accelerate efforts to document, record and recognize people to land relationships in all forms and provide humanity with secure land and property rights.

## **V. Next steps and considerations**

32. At its seventh online meeting (30 June 2020), the Expert Group considered next steps and the implementation of the FELA, and in the process, reviewed its present work plan with a view to update its activities and tasks for the next two years. The Expert Group had noted that the operationalization of the IGIF at the country-level is the priority, and to be accompanied by implementing the FELA to provide humanity with secure land and property rights.

33. To support the implementation of the FELA, the Expert Group considers the development of an assessment mechanism, perhaps 'self-assessment', where the mechanism will account for all nine pathways of the FELA, and ensure there is the needed leadership, coordination and application of internationally recognized standards, and support responsible innovation and partnerships. The Expert Group will consider existing land sector-based assessment framework(s) to avoid any duplication of efforts. The implementation guide of the IGIF should be leveraged and utilized as a reference resource to provide guidance, information and recommended actions for governments to consider, design, plan, implement and maintain effective land administration in their country.

34. Additionally, in supporting the implementation of the FELA, the Expert Group encourages:

- (a) Volunteered efforts from Member States to translate the FELA into languages other than English;
- (b) Contribution of national or sub-national use cases and examples related to the implementation of FELA;
- (c) The application of internationally recognized standards and to contribute to the development of including ISO 19152; and
- (d) Opportunities to raise awareness, advocate and promote the FELA, share and exchange experiences and practices including from private sector projects, through events organized by international and regional organizations, and thematic networks of the Committee of Experts.

35. The Expert Group seeks opportunity to engage with the regional committees of UN-GGIM to raise awareness and advocate the importance, merits and benefits of effective and efficient land administration and management, to share and exchange information and experience including appropriate use cases, practices and examples, and to encourage the implementation of the FELA at the country-level.

36. The FELA is intended to be a living document, to be periodically reviewed, updated, and tailored to suit national (or sub-national) circumstances, the changing global context and future trends, and evolving political, economic, societal, and technological landscapes.

#### *COVID-19 global pandemic*

37. COVID-19 is in many ways a virus that is all about location with spatial-temporal aspects. The impacts on, for example, communities and residents, healthcare and basic services, and the accompanying economic effects, are categorized using location. The COVID-19 global pandemic has highlighted the need for the land administration and management community to be prepared to support national responses to an emerging public health crisis with its data, capabilities and processes in a timely manner. It has also highlighted the urgency to accelerate efforts to locate, document, record and recognize people to land relationships in all their forms, in data sharing and data integration, for public health and safety. Land administration is the process of determining, recording, disseminating, and updating information about the relationships between people, land and place.

## **VI. Points for discussion**

38. **The Committee of Experts is invited to:**

- (a) Take note of the present report, express its views and provide guidance to the Expert Group on next steps to advocate and raise awareness of the merits and benefits of effective land administration;**
- (b) Encourage utilizing the implementation guide of the IGIF as a reference resource to design, plan, implement and maintain effective land administration at the country-level; and**
- (c) Express its views on the Framework for Effective Land Administration (FELA) provided as a background document to this present report, with a view towards its adoption.**