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Opening Remarks

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

First Virtual Informal Meeting, 23 August 2021, 9:00am

Dear Co-Chairs of the Committee of Experts,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates and Observers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to join you at this Eleventh Session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management – or UN-GGIM. This important annual gathering – now being convened virtually for the second time – underpins the ongoing global stress arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Impacting the entire world, the pandemic has reinforced that – as with the SDGs themselves – the most vulnerable countries continue to face the greatest challenges in:

- collecting,
- analysing,
- maintaining, and
- using timely and reliable data, including geospatial and other disaggregated location-based data.

In many countries, the urgently-needed data is often not discoverable, structured, interoperable, or standardized. Critical data cannot be readily accessed, shared, and, more importantly, integrated with other data for decision-making. However, we are finding that adversity can also bring with it, new opportunities for Member States to acquire and manage data, and to strengthen their geospatial capabilities. Indeed, they can achieve a more

comprehensive and integrated data approach, through the implementation of the frameworks and methods that have been developed by this Committee of Experts, during its first decade of work.

The United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework, or IGIF, is one such globally adopted framework. The IGIF is now being implemented in many Member States. It creates an enabling environment where countries can coordinate, develop, strengthen, and promote the efficient and effective use, and sharing, of geospatial information, for:

- policy formulation,
- decision-making, and
- innovation.

But there is much more. When I look at your organization of work, I am impressed by the immense progress that you have made in the past year, as a community across the globe:

First, I note the establishment of a High-Level Group to provide the strategic leadership, oversight, and continual development of the IGIF. This Group, with a recently completed Strategic Plan, serves to help advance and sustain the considerable progress already made by countries in implementing the IGIF.

Second, the SDGs Geospatial Roadmap clearly articulates the vision of geospatial and location-based information, and its acceptance as official data for the SDGs and their global indicators. This will directly foster greater geospatial-statistical integration. And, it will bring the global geospatial and statistical communities closer together.

Third, I am pleased to see the announcement of the second United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress, to be held from 10 to 14 October 2022, in Hyderabad, India. It will be hosted by the Government of India, in partnership with my Department, UN DESA, under the tentative theme, ‘Geo-enabling the Global Village: No One Should be Left Behind’. Clearly, this flagship event of the global geospatial information community, will take on added urgency as we recognize the importance of geospatial information during this pandemic.

I also note the continued efforts at the United Nations to establish:

- a Global Geospatial Knowledge and Innovation Centre in Deqing, China, with the generous support of the Government of China; and
- a Global Geodetic Centre of Excellence at the United Nations Campus in Bonn, Germany, with the generous support of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Distinguished Delegates,

As the Committee of Experts concludes its first decade of work, it has a requirement to:

- report back to ECOSOC after this Eleventh Session on the implementation of resolution [2016/27](#), and
- to examine the strengthening of the institutional arrangements of the Committee.

During my tenure at the United Nations, I have observed through my interactions with this Committee, that the global geospatial landscape – including its greater understanding and awareness – has grown significantly. This reflects the considerable efforts and ownership that Member States, at the expert and technical level, have invested into the ongoing programme of work of the Committee of Experts. I look forward to the continued strengthening of the modalities and operations of the Committee, as you embark upon your programme of work for the next decade.

In closing, I recognize and thank:

- the co-Chairs of your Committee,
- all the Chairpersons and leaders of the regional committees, subcommittee, expert groups, working groups, networks,
- the authors of technical reports, and
- the Rapporteur.

I commend your strong and productive sense of global cooperation and coordination, particularly in these challenging times of the global pandemic.

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN DESA, stands fully committed to support you in your important work.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and a successful Eleventh Session.

I thank you for your attention.
